THE

MYSTERIOUS CASTLE.

A TALE OF

THE MIDDLE AGES.

TRANSLATED

FROM THE FRENCH

BY MRS. KATE E. HUGHES,
(NÉE DUVAL.)

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PREFACE.

THE following story was written by the young Baron de Rabasteins, who was the last of his race, after he had embraced the monastic life at the Abbey of Arguebelle. It commences with a short sketch of his ancestors during the Crusades, and finishes by his entering the abbey as a monk.

It is a succession of pleasant, humorous stories and incidents, with some quite sensational adventures which took place in the old Castle of Monségur, in the Dauphiné, in the south of France.

It is written in the quaint style of the seventeenth century, describing the life and manners of the aristocracy and peasantry of that part of France, and the period; and is full of varied interest, mingled pathos and humor.

The spirit of piety breathes throughout. The faithful discharge of all religious duties is most forcibly inculcated and enforced by the strongest examples.

The most sacred duty of morning prayer stands very prominent throughout the work, and all the lessons being given in a very agreeable form should be not only salutary, but lasting.

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THE MYSTERIOUS CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

BIRDSEYE VIEW OF THE HOME OF THE RABASTEINS—THE WAR OF 1734—SIEGE OF PHILISBOURG—THE DEATH OF MARSHAL DE BERWICK AND OF BARON DE RABASTEINS.

FRANCIS DE LESSAC, Baron de Rabasteins, found himself, in 1724, an orphan, without father or mother, and the last of a very ancient race; of whom a most glorious tradition was carefully preserved in this family.

Pope Innocent III, having excommunicated Raymond of St. Gilles, Count of Toulouse, instituted Simon of Montfort, who then commanded the army of the crusades against the Albigenses, sovereign of the Septimanie. This famous warrior never withdrew from the obligation of conquering by arms the states that he owed to the decision of the holy siege.

Simon of Montfort could not lead to his interests the mass of the people, to whom he was a stranger by origin, language, and customs; nevertheless he succeeded in gaining a pretty large number of freeholders; amongst these was the Knight of Lessac. After having dispersed the armies of the King of Aragon, Montfort laid siege to Toulouse for the third time during this sanguinary quarrel. According to his custom the chief of the crusaders heard mass very devoutly on the 25th of June, 1218, very early in the morning, whilst the besieged, led by the Viscount de Béziers, made a most furious sally, penetrating into the camp and rapidly approaching the tent where they were offering the mass.

Instantly some knights, breathless with haste and fear, came to announce to Montfort that he was in the most imminent danger; in short, the furious enemy were overthrowing all obstacles, the uproar was approaching nearer and nearer to the tent, and the clicking of arms was heard. Montfort, deaf to the entreaties of his own people, did not allow his prayers to be interrupted for a single instant, and refused to rise before the consecration had been fully finished. As for the rest, the officiating priest showed as much resolution as the warrior. He finished the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass without troubling himself the least in the world, disposing himself to receive at the foot of the altar the palm of martyrdom under the blows of heretics.

In the midst of this frightful panic every one had

taken flight; the bravest endeavored to arrest the surging tide of assailants; only two knights remained near Simon de Montfort, faithful enough to share his confidence in the power of Almighty God. These were Guy de Lévis and Pierre de Lessac. The remembrance of an event so remarkable was perpetuated in both families. That of Lessac preserved carefully, in one of their domains, a picture, very mediocre, viewed critically, which represented this scene. This painting, executed towards the middle of the sixteenth century, in the same region, showed in perspective the city of Toulouse as it was at this period, and this enhanced the merit of the picture.

The two paternal uncles of the Baron de Rabasteins were consecrated to celibacy; they hastened him into marriage, although he was very young, having been born in the commencement of the seventeenth century. They obtained for him the hand of Marie d'Esconloubre, a rich heiress, daughter of one of the oldest families in Languedoc. Marie d'Esconloubre had been brought up until she was twenty years of age in one of the best convents in Lyons. This city, watered with the blood of martyrs in the first centuries of the church, gained a just title for being the reservoir of all the Christian virtues.

Marie d'Esconloubre knew well how to draw from this sacred fount a lively yet calm faith, which did not bear any resemblance to the enthusiastic religious transports so customary amongst the population of

the southern provinces. Marie d'Esconloubre having received the most finished and distinguished education, did not fail to be appreciated in Languedoc. They quoted her, particularly among the young persons of her age, for her wisdom and modesty. The sweetness of her soul was portrayed in her whole physiognomy. The features of her face were somewhat at fault through their extreme delicacy; her eyes, of a clear celestial blue, expressed a most modest timidity; in their dewy tenderness they seemed made only to weep. Alas! tears were not wanting.

The young family owned a mansion in the elegant city of Toulouse; the young husband preferred, however, to establish himself in a small castle situated on the banks of the Tarn, on the spot where this graceful river receives the Agout. It was one of the loveliest and most agreeable locations in the southern provinces; not far from this place is to be found the little village of Buset, in which St. Vincent of Paul, in the beginning of his life (1600), established an asylum; recent alterations have changed the front of this house, but they have preserved intact the room occupied by the holy apostle of humanity.

The determination of living constantly in the country was only taken by M. de Rabasteins upon the earnest entreaty of his young wife, who dreaded for her husband a sojourn in the large cities. The love of play and gallantry absorbed at that time

every moment in high society. Since the death of the old king, the nobility, never very rigid in their manners, affected the habits of a licentious life; and it was this that filled the heart of Marie d'Esconloubre with such proper fear.

At the end of two years of this most tender and affectionate union, Madame de Rabasteins brought into the world a son—this was myself. My mother's delicate constitution succumbed under the severe illness which attended her confinement.

Her convalescence was protracted for one year, and from that time, Marie d'Esconloubre remained an invalid; the delightful joys that a woman experiences in the midst of her maternal cares could alone bring some amelioration of her long sufferings.

Marie d'Esconloubre declared that, notwithstanding her continued illness, the happiness that she enjoyed would yet suffice for her ambition, if God would only show her by some manifest sign how long it would continue; but a sort of mistrust troubled the happiness of my poor mother, and these sad apprehensions were realized in the eighth year of her marriage.

The war broke out in 1733; they could not find a more honorable pretext. Louis XV was desirous of re-establishing upon the throne of Poland his father-in-law Stanislas. This prince had been dispossessed by an unjust competitor, whom Russia and Austria supported by their arms; now, however, the Poles being free to manifest their own inclinations, recol-

lected their old king; but these same powers opposed the re-establishment of Stanislas. For a long time the French nobility had loudly called for war, and they applauded with transports of joy the determination taken by Louis XV and his ministers.

The family of Baron de Rabasteins had never ceased following a military career. The uncles of my father, of whom one had gained the cross of St. Louis at the battle of Denain, was excited to seize this occasion of assuming once more his rank in the army. Yielding to the solicitations of his relatives, he bought a company in the regiment of M. de Lantrec. This lord, one of the highest rank in our provinces, was raising at this time a body of cavalry; a crowd of young people were burning with ardor to be enrolled in it, and with more enthusiasm, as M. de Lantrec enjoyed, as a military man, a very great reputation, and so each one hoped to signalize himself under the command of such a distinguished leader.

My mother, although so timid and gentle in appearance, did not hesitate to encourage her husband to fulfil without murmuring the obligations that his birth imposed upon him. Baron de Rabasteins, on the contrary, I must confess, did not show himself inflamed with that warlike ardor so natural to the French people of all classes; he set out with more regret than pleasure; his train was composed of eight horses, led by four men servants; his confidential domestic was named Michael; he was a man of forty years of age, very tall and very strong. In

Languedoc, where the nobility is truly popular, the servants live in the regard of their masters on a certain kind of intimate footing, which does not, however, exclude the greatest respect; and their devotion passes all expression. The unaffected exactions with which Michael performed his religious duties, distinguished him in the eyes of my mother, and in consideration of this regularity of conduct, she placed him as body servant to Baron de Rabasteins, to accompany him in the next campaign.

France was about placing on foot and organizing two armies; the weakest, commanded by the Marshal de Villars, was ordered to Milan, to operate in concert with the troops of the King of Sardinia. It would appear reasonable that the horse squadrons, to which my father belonged, should go to join the army in Italy; but a superior order directed them to pass through Languedoc, in order to join a portion of the army that had assembled at Alsace.

My mother endured this separation with a perfectly Christian resolution. Sometimes during these sad farewells, sobs choked her sweet and tender voice; but resignation soon restored her, and the last words that this angelic woman addressed to her husband were these: "Baron de Rabasteins, be like your ancestors, brave and pious."

The correspondence between my parents, as may be imagined, was as follows: The letters of Marie d'Esconloubre inclosed not only expressions of excessive tenderness, but still more the most enlightened

counsels upon the conduct that ought to be sustained in a world filled with stumbling-blocks and quicksands,—rocks upon which the unhappy voyager may often be wrecked. In reading several passages of these letters, one might almost believe that they had been written sooner by a stern father than by a young wife in love with her husband.

Each of these letters contained earnest exhortations relating to certain religious duties. "Never forget," said Marie d'Esconloubre without ceasing, "never forget to say the morning prayers, the most important of all; it is in this manner that one should commence each day, since he does not know but that it may be the last." She had charged Michael in the most explicit manner to remind his master of this obligation, if M. de Rabasteins should ever lose the remembrance of it in the midst of those agitations which are so connected with a military career.

Numerous legions were assembled on the border of the Rhine; the distinguished men at their head were the Marquise d'Asfeld, the Dukes de Noailles, de Richelieu, the Count de Bellile, the Prince de Tingri the Count Maurice de Saxe. All these generals, who already enjoyed a very high reputation for bravery and experience, were about being placed under the command of the Marshal of Berwick, conqueror of Almanza; this illustrious stranger had well known how to return through his victories the hospitality that France granted to the princes of the house of Stuart; he preserved in an advanced age

all the fire of youth. Berwick exercised an extreme severity in order to maintain among his troops the most rigorous discipline; but he granted too much indulgence in gambling of all kinds, provided it did not interfere in any way with the military service; the result of this was an incalculable depravity of manners among the officers. In the late wars, during the reign of Louis the XIV, the superior officers, as well as the subordinates, were remarkable for the strictness of their conduct. Morning and evening prayers were said in public by chaplains appointed to this noble office. The Marshal de Berwick, called to the command of the army in 1733, allowed this excellent custom to fall into disuse; he did not cease showing himself very lukewarm in matters of religion, which was very different to the account we have received of the princes of his family who sacrificed crowns to the interests of the Catholic Church.

Such an example did not fail to produce its fruits; the greater number of the officers affected to treat with a sort of contempt those who had preserved some attachment to their religious duties. Baron de Rabasteins soon became a subject of raillery for his brother officers, because his language announced a deep respect for holy things. These incessant derisions created a fixed dislike towards the one who was the object of them; irresolution commenced to gain upon him, and there is no doubt that Baron de Rabasteins would have yielded, if the admirable let-

ters of Marie d'Esconloubre had not arrived to sustain his courage, and if Michael had failed for one single day in performing his beautiful mission. Every morning this faithful guardian was accustomed to remind his master, with a sublime persistency, of the act of devotion by which he should commence the day, and he would kneel first before the Baron, reciting the "Our Father" in a firm strong voice, the Baron repeating several times over this divine prayer.

The accomplishment of this daily duty was easy whilst the army was on the march, and found lodgings assigned to each regiment beforehand. An officer could then retire to his sleeping apartment, and withdraw himself from the impertinent gaze of the multitude; but difficulties surrounded them, as soon as the campaign had commenced, when the troops were placed in front of the enemy, and distributed about as night-guards, and submitted to be continually placed upon watch. Prayers then had to be said in the open air, and from that time the pious customs of the Baron de Rabasteins were no no longer a mystery to any one. It happened many times that some of the officers would follow him, saying in a mocking tone: "We hope you have not forgotten to say your morning prayers, for without taking this precaution your horse perhaps would not be able to stand."

The Marshal de Berwick opened hostilities by a vigorous and masterly attack, the result of which was

the taking of the fort of Kell. After the conquest the French army crossed the Rhine and overwhelmed the German provinces bordering the river. It appeared that some diplomatic negotiations were moderating the ardor of both parties. At last a new rupture enabled Berwick to direct the following operations under his particular supervision: Towards the middle of May, 1734, he laid siege to Philisbourg, one of the strongholds of Germany. The place, however, well fortified and defended by a numerous garrison, opposed an heroic resistance to the first attacks; some sallies, skilfully directed, kept the besiegers at bay. On his part, the Marshal exercised a marvellous activity and watchfulness; he considered, however, the conquest of Philisbourg as certain.

On the 12th of July, 1734, long before dawn, when all the army of the besiegers were tasting still the sweets of sleep under the protection of the main guard, the imperial army went out of Philisbourg and made a most vigorous demonstration, of which the commencement was a terrible cannonading. The French camp filled the air with cries: "To arms! to horse!" As is often the case in such circumstances the danger appeared graver than it was in reality; while the suddenness of the attack acted upon the coolest men. Following his custom, M. de Berwick was the first stirring, and he hastened towards the point of attack before his usual escort had joined him in the rear.

My father, awakened in surprise, had only time to

adjust his dress and leap into the saddle in order to follow the Marshal, who was flying off rapidly; honor made him wish to overtake him speedily. At this moment a giddy young officer galloped to his side, saying to him in a most sardonic tone: "Rabasteins, you have not had leisure this time to say your morning prayers; be prudent, the first cannon-ball, whilst we are approaching the line, will certainly be for you."

My father, in a few moments, rejoined the Marshal, who was already surrounded by a number of the general officers; this valorous warrior showed himself very impatient with the persistence of one of the batteries of the enemy which some natural obstacle concealed from his sight. The bullets from this battery were tearing up the earth around him; he stepped lightly upon a rising point of ground in order to understand better the situation of the Imperialists; such an action had cost the great Turenne his life; the result here was the same. The shoulders of Berwick appeared slightly above the slope of the hill, when a bullet struck him, shattering his head; the brain actually leaped from the skull, and he fell back upon the breast of the Duke of Fitz-James, son of the Marshal.

Several volleys of cannon-shot succeeded this one rapidly, and my father, who found himself mingled with the group that surrounded the General, was overthrown by a shell which pierced his right side.

Michael was following with other valets of the

general officers. An instinct of some misfortune caused him to understand, in the midst of the confusion of the action, that his master had just received a serious injury. He forced his way through the cavalry, then, having descended from his horse, he raised my father, who was lying on the ground covered with blood, in his strong arms, and removed him to a small mound carpeted with green turf.

Baron de Rabasteins, recognizing his faithful Michael, commenced reciting the "Our Father" of the morning, following the custom practiced between them, but the death-rattle smothered in a few seconds his feeble accents. The loyal servant finished the prayer with a solemn voice, then throwing himself upon the body of his master, uttered the most heart-rending cries. This pathetic scene moved all the officers, notwithstanding the preoccupation which was caused by the death of the commander-in-chief of the army, and the next day, at sunrise, a large number of officers did not fail to say in secret their morning prayers, which they had not done for a long time.

CHAPTER II.

MADAME DE RABASTEINS BECOMES BLIND—PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LADY OF FOURVRIÈRE—PUNISHMENT OF MANDARIN—TRAGIC ADVENTURE OF BASTARDE.

HOW shall we be able to picture the affliction which filled my mother's heart when her parents had announced to her the frightful misfortune which had just fallen upon her. Both were persuaded that her feeble constitution would succumb certainly under the heavy burden. Contrary to the general expectation, Madame de Rabasteins knew how to struggle with such a terrible trial; her religious principles caused her to conceive it a duty to attach herself to life for the interests of a son who was going to remain upon earth alone, and without protection. She lived, that I might not be left entirely an orphan, but she lived inconsolable; she never ceased weeping, and her sight became very delicate; at last,—the light of those sweet eyes was entirely extinguished in this continual flood of tears. At the expiration of three years, Madame de Rabasteins could not distinguish the form of any objects unless they were brought so

near her eyelids as to touch them; she often pressed my face to hers in order to feel some of my features. One thing in me charmed her,—it was my speech, which was perfectly like that of my father; this peculiarity became more noticeable as I advanced in age. My little prattlings were a recreation to her instead of an inconvenience. She said frequently to me: "Talk, my child, talk as much as thou canst."

I attained with difficulty the age of ten years; my health, very delicate until this period, appeared then to grow stronger. A tutor was appointed to direct my education; however, my mother reserved for herself the care of forming my heart, by instructions partly religious and partly familiar. One belief never left her, governing all her thoughts; the Baron de Rabasteins would never have fallen before the lines of Philisbourg if he had not forgotten to say his morning prayers before going to battle. His widow imposed upon herself the noble obligation of watching me carefully, that I should fulfil with exactness this sacred duty before leaving my chamber. She never failed to make me say my morning prayers, commencing with the "Our Father," unless her state of suffering was such as to prevent her from accomplishing this task. Her solicitude was extended still for other objects. My two great uncles had only survived Baron de Rabasteins, their nephew, a few years; they left me very considerable estates, but very far from each other. The one who was distin-

guished by the title of knight, possessed in Provence some domains which bordered on the frontiers of the county of Nice. I found myself the inheritor of an important fortune, the administration of which exacted a certain watchfulness. My mother attended to it with a rare and clear sagacity. She directed the agents in their operations much better than her husband had done; her firmness and good word often saved us from ruinous suits.

My health failed me in consequence of a too suddenly developed growth; fits of ague were the result. The physicians advised Madame de Rabasteins to take a journey, in order to effect a healthy diversion by changing the air. My mother, having passed a portion of her youth in Lyons, had a great devotion to Our Lady of Fourvrière; she decided that we should go to this city, in order to invoke for me the protection of the Blessed Virgin, not doubting that by the grace of her assistance I would obtain a speedy cure.

We set out from Toulouse the first week of April, 1744; we passed through Montpellier and Nimes. My mother wished to go out of her way, in order to pay a visit to the Bishop of Uzès, who had blessed her marriage. M. de Bauyn gave us the most friendly reception; he filled one of the richest sees in the kingdom, and competed in magnificence with M. de Crussol, Duke of Uzès, whose superb castle rose in the middle of the village. The feudal tower of this castle was considered one of the finest monu-

ments of this kind. I wished to ascend it, but my mother opposed my doing so, fearing some accident; scarcely would she permit me to run through the park, in the midst of which was built the sumptuous Episcopal Palace.

This park may be regarded as one of the curiosities of the province of Languedoc. It is watered by a little river, whose waters, as abundant as limpid, cause several mills to turn; the principal one of these mills has become historical through a very droll event. Here it is, as M. de Bauyn related it to us:

At the time of the Reformation the Cardinal Odet de Châtillon was ambitious to have the Archbishopric of Reims; not having obtained it he turned Calvinist, and wedded soon after Florine de Hauteville; and, what appeared very singular, notwithstanding his marriage, the deserter of altars always wore the dress of a dignitary of the Church. Odet de Châtillon exercised a great control over the mind of another priest, Jean de St. Gelais, the fifty-first bishop of Uzès; he persuaded him to follow his example, and this weak man followed this wretched advice and espoused the cause of the Reformers. He was immediately expelled from his see, and the Court of Rome supplied his place with another.

At the expiration of a few years the apostate repented and wished to return to the bosom of the Church, after having made an ample apology. However, deprived of the means of existence, he came to beg the assistance of his successor; the latter,

touched with compassion, yielded to St. Gelais the revenues of one mill, which was within the vast inclosure of the bishopric. The country people composed a saying on this occasion, and it has passed into a proverb, to which time has given a certain celebrity: "The bishop turns miller." At last this change of fortune was very painful for M. de St. Gelais to support, for he loved display and good living dearly.

On leaving Uzès we crossed the Rhone at the bridge of the Holy Ghost. After having passed through Montelimart we met on the way some detachments of troops and numerous pickets of the Marshalsea; at last we arrived, on the evening of the 26th, at the town of Valence. The streets were obstructed by a tumultuous people; our carriage, led by postilions, effected with difficulty a passage through the waves of a mutinous and rebellious people. The postilion ended by setting us down in the courtyard of the best inn. Once installed in her room, my mother wished to know the cause of this extraordinary movement, and the landlord was summoned to satisfy our natural curiosity. The innkeeper kept us a long time in suspense, for before explaining he repeated ten times over: "How is it, madam, that you do not know; you are a stranger, then?"

"Certainly," replied my mother.

"Well, to-day, precisely at twelve o'clock," continued the landlord, in a deeply changed voice, "one

of the bravest and most generous of men was put to death by the hands of the executioner, outside of the ramparts, in front of the great tower."

"But who was he?"

"Mandarin! since I must tell you." And the landlord beat his breast, and stamped his feet on the floor of the room.

Madame de Rabasteins, in her usual calm manner, commenced saying to him:

"But who is this Mandarin?"

At this question, asked in a tone of indifference, the astonished man threw his arms up towards heaven, saying: "Since Mandarin is unknown to you, I have nothing more to say." Saying these words, he rushed down stairs and disappeared.

"Landlord, landlord!" cried we, "please tell us who is this Mandarin?" But the landlord did not return. The door of our room remained open. At this moment we saw appear upon the sill a well-dressed gentleman; from one of the button-holes of his coat hung the cross of St. Louis. This officer saluted my mother very politely, saying: "Madam, I occupy the room next to you; I heard the conversation with M. Durand, and if you wish to know who this Mandarin is, in whose fate you take such a lively interest, I can, if you will permit me, satisfy your curiosity."

My mother, thanking the officer, begged him to be seated near her, that she might be able to hear and understand him better. The stranger related it in these words:

"Mandarin was certainly a most determined robber; but, in order to lessen in the eyes of the vulgar the odium of his life, he styled himself chief of the contrabandists. He and his companions desolated the provinces bordering on the Rhone; his band became so numerous, his attacks so bold, that the government of Dauphiné found themselves obliged to send out four thousand men to deliver the country from such a scourge. Mandarin and the greater part of his band were pursued vigorously as far as Savoy. There the notorious brigand, hunted down in a miserable village, fell into the hands of the Marshal's troops. They had been under a good escort to Valence, where the criminal court, presided over by the grand provost of Lyons, judged him, and condemned him to be broken alive on the wheel."

My mother, interrupting the officer, said to him: "Will you explain to me, sir, how this Mandarin, who appears to be a great criminal, could inspire our landlord with such dramatic compassion?"

"This is the cause: Mandarin is the son of a workman of this province; the long resistance that he has opposed to the troops sent out against him, and his audacious attacks, have exalted him in the minds of the people. Besides, he pretended to respect the dwellings of the poor; his rage was exercised principally upon the castles; he robbed, burnt them, and in case of resistance on the part of the inmates, the furious conqueror killed them. The sums of money inclosed in the boxes of the collectors of taxes, or the receivers of imposts, passed into his possession. The

peasants, who had nothing to fear on the part of this leader of the contrabandists, found, on the contrary, that it was to their interest to second him in his enterprises, for he paid generously for services that were rendered to him. Renown spread abroad a thousand absurd stories about him every day. His partisans did not cease celebrating his courage and generosity. This is the reason why the history of his life has become so popular.

"Mandarin was still a young man, and of very fine appearance; he was broken on the wheel alive this morning in the midst of an extraordinary crowd. M. de Thyard, Lieutenant of the Governor of the province, was brought from Grenoble to Valence, accompanied by a body of troops, in order to protect the public executioner in his frightful duty, for the excitement that spread abroad through the country, caused them to fear that the people would seek to deliver the chief of the contrabandists. The execution of Mandarin drew a crowd of the curious here. The termination of this sorrowful drama has been signalized by a circumstance remarkable enough to become the topic of every conversation.

"You know, madam, that in the southern provinces the penitential orders are held in great esteem among the workmen; each trade adopts one of these confraternities in preference to all others, and, when one of their members die, he is buried by the brotherhood. Mandarin, the son of a blacksmith, was associated very early in life with the black penitents, and on

coming out of prison this morning, thirty men from this brotherhood pressed around him reciting the prayers for the dying. A triple rank of soldiers separated them from the people. Contrary to the expectations of the public, the prisoner, whose fearlessness and strength had become proverbial, showed no resolution in this last moment; he staggered as he walked. The two priests who had the charge of giving him the last consolations of religion, were obliged to support him in their arms, and a death-like pallor overspread his fine face. The funeral procession proceeded for about a quarter of an hour, and were just reaching the line of the ramparts, when a black penitent, the face carefully concealed by the cowl, ran into the centre of the city. Having passed through the line of the fusileers with great dexterity, he approached Mandarin quickly, whispered for a few seconds in his ear, then retiring was lost to sight amidst the crowd of spectators, but not before they had time to remark the smallness of his feet, as well as the whiteness of his skin, as on all these occasions the penitents appear barefooted. This one was no other than a young woman, covered with a black sack. The surprising part of this adventure was that the few words whispered in the ear of the prisoner produced the effect of an electrical shock. Mandarin suddenly raised his head, a faint blush suffused his face, and this man, who one moment before dragged himself along with difficulty, now advanced with a firm step towards the place of

punishment, and has not ceased showing the most heroic resignation in the midst of all the tortures. What could this woman have said to him to effect such a metamorphose in one single instant? This, no one can discover, and, consequently, this strange incident has become the subject of a thousand conjectures."

We set out for Lyons on the 27th of April, and the day after our arrival in this city, a servant took me upon his back to take me up to Fourvière, for the little chapel is situated on quite a hill, commanding the city. This rustic church was filled with the faithful. A mass was said for my intention in order to obtain the restoration of my health through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. This pilgrimage fatigued my tender mother extremely, but the hopes that she had conceived restored calm to her alarmed soul. At the end of one month of tranquillity, the attacks of fever disappeared entirely without leaving any trace.

The Marquis of Montdragon, the King's steward, a relation of Madame de Rabasteins, came to invite us to pass a few days at his castle at St. Chamond. The little village that bears this name is situated about twelve leagues from Lyons; its population is composed of honest and industrious people. My mother, in hopes that this new change would be beneficial to the health of her son, accepted the invitation of M. de Montdragon. Having left Lyons on the 4th of May, after mass, we stopped half way

to dine, then having continued our route, we arrived near seven o'clock at St. Chamond. What was our astonishment at finding the inhabitants of the place in the liveliest state of excitement. The women whispered to each other on the doorsills, the men formed animated groups the whole length of the main street, and as for the soldiers, St. Chamond presented the same appearance that we remarked in Valence six weeks before. My mother could not see what was passing around her, but the confused murmur of voices, and the difficulty that our carriage experienced in passing through the crowd, exercised her mind strongly. "What has happened?" asked she, "are they going to break some robber on the wheel?"

The castle of the Marquis de Montdragon commands St. Chamond, as Fourvière commands Lyons. We had to make a considerable ascent before arriving at the gate. We found our relative at home, whose cordial reception recompensed us fully for the fatigues of the journey.

The servants and the whole household seemed bewildered. Madame de Rabasteins, having ensconced herself in the drawing-room, begged the Marquis de Montdragon to explain to her the reason for the great confusion that she had observed among the inhabitants of St. Chamond, who had always enjoyed such a great reputation for orderly conduct.

"They merit it under every aspect," replied the Marquis de Montdragon. "That which has just happened in our village would serve as material for a

long history, but now you have need of repose; to-morrow morning I will recite to you this epic poem."

"My cousin, I ask pardon," cried my mother, "I will not leave you this evening until you have recited the whole of it to me."

"Since you give the order in such a determined manner," replied the Marquis de Montdragon, "I will obey. Give me your attention. Amongst the most respectable of the families of the tradespeople of St. Chamond, was that of Peter Bastarde, a silk broker by trade. He had gained the affections of all his fellow-citizens by the loyalty of his character. He had married a very pretty woman, whom he loved tenderly. She had just given him the second child, when necessity compelled him to set out upon one of those long and painful journeys which the obligations of his calling forced upon him. He went twice a year across the mountains of the Cévennes, of Velay and Vivarais, to sell silks to several merchants in Lyons. This broker, whose marriage had placed him in comfortable circumstances, only kept a little office in St. Chamond, while he and his young family lived in a very pretty dwelling, located upon the top of a small hill half a league from the village; you can see it very distinctly from the windows of the castle. To reach the broker's dwelling you are obliged to cross a ravine, which is only a slight obstacle in ordinary weather; but this ravine serves as the bed of a

stream, which during a storm is swollen in a most extraordinary manner. Floods of water beat down suddenly in our country, making great ravages. When these misfortunes occur, the stream that you are about to cross on foot, and which a few moments before may be perfectly dry, is changed into a rushing river, which carries away with it stones, trees, and even cattle. The beds of these torrents extend over a continued line of whitened rocks. They are filled with deep holes, some square, others in the form of a tunnel. These openings become like great gulfs, whilst the rush of waters upturns instantly the sand with which they are filled.

"After a journey of several months, Bastarde turned his face with joy toward his native country of St. Chamond. During his sojourn at Puy, he had not failed to purchase some beautiful laces to offer to his wife on the day of her feast; she was named Monica. When stopping at the inns to feed his horse, the broker showed several times, to the young girls whom he found assembled there, the beautiful laces destined for his well-beloved; he carried them carefully wrapped in the pocket of his large overcoat. Bastarde had passed over almost the entire space that separated him from his family, and his heart beat quickly, when on the morning of the 3d of May he went out from St. Etienne to commence a day whose end promised him such sweet joys; the heat was excessive, the horizon seemed to be on fire; gradually the sunlight was darkened by heavy

clouds; a burning wind mingled with lightning appeared as the precursor of one of those terrible storms that the inhabitants of our country have so much reason to fear; day declined; a gloomy veil was spread over the face of nature. Bastarde urged on his horse; he reached a little inn situated on the right where the road separated; the landlord was looking out with uneasiness from his door-sill; the heavens were already very dark from the storm; rain commenced to fall in large drops.

"'M. Bastarde,' said the inn-keeper to the broker, 'you must stop here and let me fasten your horse in my stable, he seems very tired; if you go on you will be caught in the storm?'

"'No, no, I thank you; I shall have time to reach there,' replied Bastarde; 'to-morrow will be my wife's feast, and I expect to offer her this evening the beautiful laces that I have bought for her. I would not for the world fail to be there; she expects me.'

"Saying these words he spurred on his horse violently and flew off swiftly, taking the direct road to his house, without passing through St. Chamond. At the end of a quarter of an hour the storm broke over his head with a frightful fury, but did not prevent his horse from continuing his travel. After a most painful journey, Bastarde was able to distinguish by the illumination of the lightning the roof of his house; the sight of this dwelling, that held the objects of all his affections, reanimated his

courage; but, in order to reach his door-sill, he must necessarily cross the ravine which bordered the terrace walk. By this time the waters of the torrent had filled it entirely; they dashed about in wild waves with a mournful roar.

"One living being wandered on the shore uttering shrill and inarticulate cries; it was one of those inoffensive idiots that the country people call an innocent; he belonged to some rich relations who lived near Bastarde's house; this unfortunate being, seventeen years of age, escaped frequently to wander through the fields; some instinct made him understand that he should return to his family as night approached. This evening the idiot also sought to overcome the terrible obstacle which barred his way. His lamentations moved the broker with pity, for he knew him; seizing him with a strong arm, Bastarde raised him from the ground and placed him on the saddle behind him; then he spurred the animal violently; the horse, fatigued with his long journey, and unaccustomed to such a heavy burden, instead of crossing the torrent fell heavily into the midst of the abyss.

"I cannot say in what manner precisely," added the Marquis de Montdragon, "this catastrophe happened; however, it is true that the next day, when the waters had run off and the stream was restored to its usual condition, some peasants found the horse drowned, and the hat of the unfortunate Bastarde. This hat with a wide brim had floated,

and was caught in the branches of a tree. Notwithstanding the most careful search, they have never been able to recover the body of the broker; thousands of persons have been employed in it, for they wished to give it the honors of a burial; every one was convinced that the corpse had been carried away into the Gier River, into which the fatal stream empties itself. As for the innocent, heaven permitted that he should be saved; nevertheless his brain was so much disordered by the adventure that since then, that is to say for the last two years, this young man has not failed for one single day to run up and down the banks of the stream, uttering the most heartrending cries, and pointing to the spot where the fall took place, as if to infer that his unfortunate companion was still lying there.

"The tragical end of Bastarde produced a universal mourning in the village of St. Chamond; all the men of his age had lost in him a devoted friend. The affliction of his widow appeared very deep at first, but she became calm in a surprisingly short time. Monica was pretty and rich; they were not slow in seeking her hand; she accepted gracefully the flatteries of her numerous admirers. At last a hardware dealer from Roanne obtained the preference over all the others; the engagement had taken place, to the great disgust of the people of St. Chamond, who thought that she, whose husband had perished in so unhappy a manner, should never dare to marry again; for Monica knew that Bastarde had

fallen a victim to his eagerness to reach home; he would have avoided the accident had he put off until the next day the pleasure of offering her the laces. This woman, carried away by an unjustifiable levity, declared then to her newly betrothed that she intended to be married on the day of her feast. This was customary in several of our cantons; but she did not reflect that her feast fell precisely on the day following the anniversary of the death of her husband. Some charitable person reminded her of this. Monica then wished to postpone the wedding until the commencement of the following week; but her betrothed, a determined man, refused to do so, saying that if he withdrew from the first determination, the people of St. Chamond would imagine that he recoiled before the fear of the charivari with which they threatened the newly-married pair. In short, the workmen of our village, indignant at seeing Monica, the mother of two children, marry again so quickly, have raised, as they said, a formidable charivari; one-half of the population were to take part in it. On his side, the hardware dealer from Roanne invited to his wedding a large number of relations and friends, making them promise to revenge the insult that they were about to offer to his wife. This man did not fear warning the people of St. Chamond that if they approached too near the terrace of Monica's house that he would fire upon them. Our young people have not been in the least intimidated by this threat; they determined to go beyond

the ravine to give the charivari, which has been announced for a long time in a most pompous manner. This morning, the 4th of May, the marriage was celebrated in the church of a little parish on the wife's domain. The charivari was to have taken place towards noon; the magistrates strongly opposed it, fearing that it would result in some bloody collision. The wedding took place about ten o'clock this morning, and this is what happened at the same time: instead of floods, as in the preceding years, we have had for three months a most destructive drought. The bed of the stream, instead of rushing with tumultuous waves, has been changed into a dusty road, the wind has even swept out the sand with which the holes were filled. Some young boys were playing on this sandy strand; the eldest wished to sound the depth of one of these vast tunnels. He found, under the first bed of sand, a human skull, dressed with a very well-furnished head of hair. He uttered cries of fright; his companions, having run there, dug out this head, which rested on large shoulders. The noise of such an extraordinary discovery in a few moments reached St. Chamond; a crowd of men repaired to the stream, and drew out from thence the body of the silk broker, which, having fallen into a deep and close tunnel, had not been carried away by the rushing waters; it had remained there buried in the sand. This excavation being half empty, by reason of the long drought, the head of the corpse had easily appeared at the sur-

face; decomposition, although it had taken place, had not spread so far as to emit a very strong odor. They prepared a coffin immediately, then the parish priest of St. Chamond came; they raised the body, and proceeded to bury it with all the ceremonies prescribed by the Church. A considerable crowd were eager to accompany the mortal remains of the unfortunate Bastarde to the cemetery. Thus, in a few hours' interval, one priest has blessed the second marriage of Monica, and another priest has buried her first husband. Two relations of Bastarde were chief mourners. One odd idea entered their heads; they placed in a little silver bowl the package of laces that the silk broker carried in his side-pocket to offer to his wife; they were damp, but entire. These two relations made their way towards the house of the newly-married ones; the crowd of the curious who escorted them stopped, nevertheless, on this side of the ravine which serves as the boundary line between the two parishes. Both deputies advanced silently towards the terrace; the hardware dealer from Roanne, who was watching from his garden with his friends, with the intention of repulsing vigorously the charivari, allowed the two individuals to approach, as their manner indicated no hostility. They entered the house, and asked the favor of speaking to the bride, who received them with a somewhat embarrassed air. The eldest of the envoys said to her in a very solemn tone:

"'Monica, we have come to offer you the laces that

Bastarde was to have given you on the day of your feast; that is two years ago; they belong to you, take them.'

"The woman seemed about to faint; the two relations, profiting by the confusion occasioned by this scene, slipped out of the parlor, and reached the road. But at the expiration of a few moments the hardware dealer had reflected, and, anxious to revenge the insult that his wife had just received, he set out, with all his friends, in pursuit of the envoys, to beat them soundly. The people of St. Chamond, who were looking on from the other side of the ravine, thought that their companions were in some danger; they therefore suddenly crossed the stream to come to their assistance. It has resulted in a terrible battle, in which the bridegroom has received a broken leg. His friends have carried him off on their shoulders. The confusion that you observed on entering our village, ordinarily so quiet and peaceful, arose from the extraordinary and conflicting events with which this day has been filled. My little epic poem is finished, my dear cousin," said M. de Montdragon; "you will pity, without doubt, the fate of the unfortunate Bastarde."

"Alas!" replied my mother, "I do pity him from my very soul, but, on setting out from St. Etienne, on the 3d of May, perhaps he had not said his morning prayers."

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS SOJOURNS SOME TIME AT LYONS, THEN HE SETS OUT FOR PROVENCE—THE BRIGAND CAUVIN, CALLED THE MAN WITH THREE EYES—SINGULAR ADVENTURES OF THE TRAINBEARER OF THE BISHOP OF FRÉJUS.

AS I grew older the maternal solicitude of Madame de Rabasteins seemed to increase; she appeared only to live for me. In the vegetable kingdom the fruit draws its life from the tree; in this case the tree drew life from the fruit. Each moment was filled with cruel anxieties. They were imprudent enough to relate to her the sad occurrence of a child of twelve years of age, who having retired to bed in full health, was found dead the next morning, in consequence of the rupture of an aneurism. From this time she would rise in the night, and approaching my bed softly would remain there several hours watching to assure herself that I still breathed. It was with much trouble that Clotilde, the maid, succeeded in taking her back to her alcove.

The Marquis of Montdragon wished to keep us with him until the end of May. On leaving this estimable relative we returned to Lyons, where my mother wished to sojourn. A number of ladies of her own age, who had been educated in the same convent, overwhelmed her with marks of friendship and tenderness, so that we remained in this city until the commencement of August, 1744. At last, we were preparing to leave positively, when an event took place which forced us to remain against our will.

On the evening of the 7th of August, an extraordinary rumor was spread abroad in the second city in the kingdom. For several months numerous legions of well-disciplined troops were assembled on the eastern frontiers. The King, then in Lorraine, intended directing himself the campaign that was about commencing, but he fell dangerously ill at Metz. On the 9th a courier brought the news that the illness of the royal patient had increased in the most alarming manner. The next day a second message announced that the physicians despaired of saving the King. M. de Montdragon arrived in great haste from St. Chamond; we learned the fact, and it caused my mother to understand the trouble that she would have in travelling under such circumstances. On the 14th, a third courier, coming directly from Metz, declared that at the time of his departure the monarch was still more ill, and that the Bishop of Soissons had administered to him dur-

ing the day the last sacraments. From the moment that the noise of this news was spread abroad in every quarter, the churches and the smallest chapels were filled with the faithful, who united in the intention of asking Heaven for the preservation of those precious days. Inspired by this noble motive, my tutor and myself led Madame de Rabasteins to the church of St. Nizier, a short distance from our lodgings. In passing through the streets we remarked that consternation sat on every face; the tradespeople, gathered in little groups, discussed the news among them with manifest and deeply-felt affliction; they drew near and questioned one another without being acquainted.

On coming out of the church of St. Nizier, at the end of an hour of prayer, my mother expressed the desire of going to pay a visit to the Superior of the Abbey of St. Pierre, with whom she was particularly well acquainted. It was necessary, to reach this place, to pass through the centre of the city; we saw everywhere anxious people and faces filled with consternation. At last we succeeded with difficulty in reaching the abbey. My mother was announced to the Superior, and on being told that she would see her immediately, she permitted me to go out with my tutor. The crowd of merchants, workmen, priests, and laity besieged the gates of the Hotel de Ville, where the magistrates held their court under the presidency of M. de Fumel, Lieu-

tenant-General of the Duke of Villeroi, Governor of the province of Lyons.

From the midst of this mass of sorrowful people arose in an instant the most mournful groans, to which the great bell of St. John responded; under the solemn circumstances they tolled the bell. Suddenly was heard from the midst of this crowd of affrighted people this cry, uttered by a simple workman, "To Fourvrière! To Fourvrière!" Immediately a thousand voices answered to this call, whose value each one understood. At once, men, women, and children set off in bands in different directions to reach the shores of the Saone and cross this river, which separates the city from the old quarter, above which rises the mountain of Fourvrière.

We allowed ourselves to be carried away with the crowd, and, reaching the wharf, we saw Peter's bridge, the only one, crowded with people. A number of little boats were there to supply the insufficiency of this passage, and they hurried over the people who were eager to ascend to the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. My tutor, fearing that some accident might happen to his pupil, would not permit me to go farther, and insisted upon my returning to my mother at the Abbey St. Pierre. The streets, lately so crowded, appeared to us now deserted; in short, in a few hours, half of the population on the right shore were crowding the several roads which led to the hill.

The city remained for three days plunged in mortal

fear. At last, on the evening of the 17th, a courier arrived breathless, and descended from his horse before the Hotel de Ville. A few moments after, the provost appeared on the balcony, surrounded with magistrates; he announced, in a voice trembling with emotion, to the crowd assembled on the Place des Terreaux, that the danger had passed, and that the King was much better.

What cries of joy arose on the reception of this good news, and when the courier went out of the Hotel de Ville, they surrounded him, they raised him, carried him off on their shoulders, and covered him entirely with the richest and most beautiful ribands. The next day a second message came to confirm the good news of the evening before, adding to it a most miraculous coincidence, which excited great enthusiasm among the people of Lyons, who were full of faith. *The crisis*, which turned so favorably for the King, had taken place exactly on the 15th of August, the day of the Blessed Virgin's feast. Such a great blessing was due to the intercession of our Lady of Fourvrière, and every one in Lyons could claim the merit of having contributed to the health of the monarch by their fervent prayers. At the time that I witnessed this event I had scarcely entered my seventeenth year; my judgment was but slightly formed, yet my heart was singularly touched by the sight of such deep grief and such excessive joy. I felt then the value of a King who knew how to inspire his people with such emotions.

We left Lyons on the 27th of August, intending to travel through Provence, in order to visit the estates that I possessed between Cannes and Antibes. On returning from this excursion, we were to revisit the Dauphiné, and pass the rest of the autumn in an old castle situated in the midst of the mountains, between Montélimart and Nyons.

My tutor, twenty-four years of age, did not accompany us. For a long time he had felt himself drawn toward the vocation of the priesthood; he thanked my mother for all her kindness, and left us to enter the Seminary of St. Irénée, where he was intimately acquainted with one of the directors. The pure motive which induced this young man to retire from the world, produced in my soul a sensation which was never effaced; not a single day passed that I did not think of it seriously.

A sudden rising of the waters of the Rhone detained us for two days in the town of Tain. We then pursued our route as far as Brignolles, where the Countesses of Provence bring their children on account of the extreme salubrity of the air. Such a preference should necessarily reccommend this town to the inhabitants of the surrounding country. In short, nurseries flowed into its bosom; never had I seen so many little children; every door-sill was carpeted with them; they crowded the streets, everywhere our coachman had to take great care not to crush some of them under the horses' feet.

The relay next to Brignolles was Flassans, a large

market-town, around which the House of Condé possessed some beautiful woodland. They told us that a rich old officer kept the post and owed it to the protection of the Prince of Condé. While the grooms were changing our horses, the postmaster gave to the postboy, who was getting on his horse, an express order, which seemed to concern ourselves; we could not understand the sense of it, since he spoke in Provençal. My mother had a very fine hearing, and the least incident caused her uneasiness. She wished to know what he was doing, and did not hesitate inviting the postmaster to approach, and explain the meaning of this order.

"Madam," said the officer, in French, "I ordered the postboy to show you Cauvin's stone."

"Who is Cauvin?" asked my mother.

"He was a famous robber, called 'The man with the three eyes.' He rendered himself celebrated throughout the country by the boldest and drollest tricks. They broke him alive on the wheel last year."

The blind like persons to relate their histories to them, in order to have the gratification of relating theirs in their turn.

"Sir," said Madame de Rabasteins, in a friendly tone, "will you then tell us some of the great deeds of this Cauvin? I will pay for another post-stage, and if you deem it necessary I will descend from my carriage."

"Madam, do not disturb yourself," replied the

postmaster, "I can speak to you very conveniently at your carriage-door."

My mother arranged herself so as to hear better, and her face colored with pleasure when the narrator commenced.

"Cauvin started by being a poacher; compelled to fly from the pursuit of the guards of the Prince of Condé, he was forced to abandon the forest of Flassans, which furnished him with the means of nourishing his family with game. Reduced to despair, he became a highway robber. This is the manner in which he established himself in this new trade. He lived with his wife in a most miserable little hut, built in the midst of the heath, about five hundred steps from the road to Italy that you are travelling at this moment. On this road and on a level with the hut was the site of an inn lately set on fire by accident; the proprietors had removed it entirely; the materials were carefully carried away from the ground. However, they neglected to take away, on account of its great weight, a large stone, of about eight feet in length, and hollowed in such a way as to serve as a trough for the watering of horses. This stone remained on the ground, the hollow side leaning against a line of the thickest brushwood. Cauvin appropriated this stone to himself after a fashion, and resolved to make it serve for the accomplishment of his designs. He was a fearless man, vigorous and agile. He took it upon himself to shave his hair off up to the top of his head,

and to paint in the middle of his forehead a third eye, by means of some powerful corrosive substance. Such an ornament rendered a physiognomy already hideous, still more frightful. He abandoned the use of a hat, in order that they might judge better of his beauty. Cauvin's wife kept watch upon a slight eminence, and warned her husband when she perceived some traveller on a horse, or some post-stage; the man ran, armed with a blunderbuss, and leaned on a hillock, which commanded the road. When the traveller arrived at the rising ground, Cauvin would order him to throw down his purse, silver, and jewels. The unfortunate one, terrified at the sight of this horrible face, preferred giving up his money to his life. The traveller who was determined enough to resist, fell under a shower of balls. Several inhabitants of these cantons have perished in this manner. The expedition finished, Cauvin ran to conceal himself in the hollow stone, remaining there during the night, then going to sleep in his hut, and commencing again the next day. The searches of the Marshalsea amounted to nothing; the brigand would disappear before the horsemen without their being able to discover the place which served him for a retreat. This sudden disappearance, and still more the *three eyes*, acquired for the poacher the reputation of a sorcerer. Here is an adventure that happened last autumn.

"The Marquis of Rannes possesses some estates in this country. He had just left Versailles; the noise

of his success in the court circles had preceded him in Provence; every castle gave him a feast; the most brilliant reunions had taken place in his honor; he appeared in the dashing costume of a colonel of dragoons, with silver-gilt helmet, and short sword very richly chased; a thing elsewhere very ridiculous, for gentlemen generally only wore their uniform while in the active service of the regiment. M. de Latour, President of the Parliament of Aix, had gathered together the flower of the nobility in a castle in the neighborhood; M. de Rannes made his appearance there in his brilliant costume, and was the observed of all observers. He was returning toward evening to his dwelling, accompanied by two grooms, and trilling the last romance that he had sung at the house of the President, in the presence of a swarm of beauties, when the infamous Cauvin interrupted him suddenly in the midst of a most beautiful roulade, crying to him in a terrible voice, 'Stop!' At the sight of this face laden with three eyes, the two grooms, seized with fright, let loose their bridles and fled through the country, leaving their master alone in the presence of the bandit. Cauvin presented to M. de Rannes the mouth of his renowned blunderbuss, and ordered him to throw to the ground his watch and his purse, which he did very quickly. The sight of the silver-gilt helmet and the rich short sword excited the cupidity of the thief; he insisted, in a manner that allowed of no refusal, that the colonel should throw both at the same

time on the road. Our brilliant colonel saw himself reduced to the necessity of returning home disarmed and bareheaded. He set out immediately for Paris, where he was never heard to speak of his encounter with the poacher. Cauvin had picked up in this trade of highway robbery a sum of money considerable enough to enable him to buy a house in the neighborhood of Monaco; but he learned that several English families were about going to Nice to spend the next winter; they were to come to this town in passing through Provence. The poacher ran to post himself in his accustomed ambuscade, thinking that this expedition would procure for him considerable booty. In short, several post-stages were entirely stripped by this bold rogue. This new rascality, executed with surprising dexterity, attracted the attention of the magistrates.

"The cavalry of the Marshalsea of several brigades were gathered together in Flassans, and received orders to execute a general beating of the bush in order to find the bandit; a number of hunters united themselves with the military, with the intention of delivering the country from the perpetual fright it was kept in by the audacious feats of the man with the three eyes. During one entire week the most active searches produced no result. At several turns they saw the brigand appear in the midst of the heath, then he would disappear when they believed they had him. The soldiers and hunters, worn out with fatigue, returned to their

lodgings very sorrowfully, when the continued barking of several dogs attracted their attention. These dogs yelped with violence, seeking to penetrate the thicket against which the hollow stone leaned. The hunters imagined that this mass of brushwood concealed some great beast; they, therefore, resolved to catch it, deeming that this capture would be at least a feeble recompense for their disappointment. The dogs stopped before this obstacle, and would not cease barking. The first hunter discovered through the briers a sort of path which ended at the centre of the hollow stone, upon which stone they all had been seated many times during this conflict. Every one gathered around this wonderful hiding-place, and drew from thence Master Cauvin, like a bird taken in a trap. The bandit was lying at full length; the blunderbuss at his side; his gourd-bottle had been empty for a long time, and if the search had continued two days longer with the same activity, the robber, compelled to keep himself concealed, would have died of hunger in his tomb; which would have been much better than to perish by the hand of the executioner, in the midst of the most frightful tortures."

The narrator having finished his discourse bade us good-bye, and gave the postilion the signal of departure. On arriving at the next relay my mother ordered me to pay for an extra post-stage for the history of Cauvin. The same evening we reached Fréjus, without accident, whose bishop, M. du Bel-

lay, was related to my family. Instead of a beautiful cathedral, or magnificent Episcopal palace, our relation showed us in detail the superb remains of Roman antiquities which surrounded the town. He filled one of the most gloomy and least important sees in France. His predecessor, the Cardinal de Fleuri, styled himself Bishop of Fréjus by divine indignation. Nevertheless, this bishopric was worth thirty thousand livres, which enabled M. du Bellay to keep up a very fine establishment.

The prelate retained in his service as train-bearer* an old lieutenant of the navy, Knight of St. Louis, who was a little, round, plump man, active and jolly; his face beamed with happiness notwithstanding that a portion of the career of this officer had been filled with bitterness; for the Algerians, and still later the English, had held him prisoner for more than ten years.

The train-bearer amused my mother very much by the recital of his adventures.

"In 1718, although very young," said he, "I belonged to the staff of a frigate which carried M. de Ganay, our minister to Naples. We were ordered, on returning, to explore the coast of Sicily. Our vessel lay at anchor before Sorrento; they sent me

* At this period most of the bishops kept in their houses a person whose office was to carry the train of their robe at great ceremonies; they were generally retired officers without fortune; they were called train-bearers from the Latin word *cauda*, which means train.

with the ship's boat and some men to sound the shore four miles lower down. We ran into a bay which concealed the ship's boat entirely from sight of the frigate; we were attacked by Algerian pirates; our resistance was most vigorous, but I saw massacred before my eyes the sailors who accompanied me. The officer's badge saved my life, unfortunately; in losing it, I should have escaped the horrible treatment which awaited me at Algiers. In this infamous country human beings are divided into two very distinct classes, the conquerors and the conquered; everything is taught by means of the stick, nor is this metaphorical; the European who, led into slavery, revolts against this conduct, receives death. I have had the proof of it before my eyes several times.

"Another sea officer, taken prisoner before I was, not being able to endure these repeated blows given in such an unmerciful manner, threw himself upon the man who struck him; the master raised his hand, and at this sign a janissary crushed the head of the Christian with an inconceivable rapidity.

"These soldiers possess a cunning dexterity which is wonderful; they practice some kind of tricks in a very droll manner; they place a pile of plates upon the table; the difficulty consists in raising with one backstroke of the sword the top plate without breaking the others, and even without shaking them. The predecessor of the Dey, whose property I became, acted differently with regard to rebellious slaves; he had them rolled the whole length of the quay in a

cask lined with iron spikes. This sort of punishment appears to be very old on the African shore; it is said Regulus perished in this manner, a victim to the Carthaginian ferocity.

"I was purchased by a rich merchant, who fancied making me a shoemaker; they furnished me with the necessary tools, and my master ordered me to make him some shoes of which he presented me the model; my hand had never taken a stitch; I alleged my inability in the provincial tongue then much used in the Barbary States; I received for my answer twenty blows with a stick, the next day as many more; a daily repetition of the same filled out the rest of the week. Stimulated by this kind of encouragement I redoubled my efforts to sew, whether well or badly; in short, at the expiration of four months of this apprenticeship, I succeeded in offering to my gracious master a charming pair of slippers; he then merely remarked to me with his Eastern indifference: I knew that you would end in making them.

"Fate gave me for a companion in captivity the captain of a merchantman who came from Havre as supercargo to Malta; they decided that he should become a gardener. He had been at sea from the age of twelve years; his hands had never touched spade or line; he cried out against it; the blows of the stick fell heavy upon him; his punishment lasted less time than mine; the captain having taken a liking to his new trade soon excelled in it, and good

treatment succeeded the flagellations. Most joyous with his change of fortune, he was one day trilling some verses from an old Normandy song, which his master, who was walking only a few steps behind him, heard; he was one of the Dey's treasurers; he liked above all things the European songs; accordingly he gave orders that the slave should sing the next day before the Mussulman officer. The captain had the most false and discordant voice that you could possibly ever hear. When he heard it, the Algerian supposed that this Christian wished to mock him, consequently a dozen blows with the stick were his reward; the following day the melody commenced again, and as many more blows of the stick bore witness to the discontent of the treasurer; in short, to abridge my recital, I shall have the honor of telling you that my unhappy friend finished by singing most agreeably."

My mother wished to know how the train-bearer had succeeded in escaping from the chains of slavery.

"I owed, in some manner, this unhoped for favor to the most terrible of scourges, to the plague," replied the officer. "My captivity lasted two years when the plague broke out in Marseilles. You know how many misfortunes this old city had to endure. Famine appeared to overwhelm it completely. The heart of the Holy Father, ever with the faithful, was moved at the news of so much misfortune. Clement XI hastened to send vessels to Marseilles loaded with wheat. The squadron from Tunis met

this convoy of grain and wished to seize it; nevertheless the Chief of the Barbary States, on learning its destination, allowed himself to be touched with compassion; and not only did he give a free passage to the ships sent out by the Pope, but he gave them an escort of several galleys.

"One of the first acts of Cardinal de Fleuri, when he became minister, was to liquidate with Benoit XIII the debt of gratitude that France had contracted with Clement XI, six years before.*

"The Count de Vogué, ambassador extraordinary, was sent to Rome to thank the Holy Father. At the same time another ambassador, loaded with rich presents, was sent to the Bey of Tunis, to explain to him the sentiments of gratitude that the noble conduct of his admiral had inspired the Court of France. The same ambassador had the express mission of entreating the Bey of Tunis to intercede with the Dey of Algiers to ransom several hundred French captives retained in the city or in the convict prisons.

"The negotiation succeeded,—they do not know by what means,—and a few months after some French vessels came to take us on board. Without this

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* The City of Marseilles has erected on the Place St. Féréol, a monument in honor of those who united in relieving the misery of its inhabitants during the plague of 1720. Among the names signalized by public gratitude is that of the Bey of Tunis.

happy incident having occurred, I should, perhaps, still be making slippers in Algiers.

"I had just obtained the grade of lieutenant in the navy," continued the train-bearer, "when war broke out between Spain and England, in 1734. The Court of France maintained a neutrality; they permitted, nevertheless, one hundred navy officers to go and serve Her Catholic Majesty as volunteers. I was of this number. The frigate Santa Maria, on which I was aboard, went out of the Corogue to rally the squadron of Cadiz, but arriving at the head of the mouth of the Tagus, we were attacked by a division of the British squadron. Resistance became useless; the frigate fell into the power of the enemy. They took the staff officers on board one of the vessels. I was placed on that commanded by Mr. Maitland, an officer of great merit. Never did any Englishman drink as much wine and liquor as Mr. Maitland. His face bore ample testimony to his intemperance. The captain had a nose like every other human being; but at the end of this nose there was a second, the two united formed one enormous nose, which was as red as the end of a firebrand. The crew called him the burning coal.

"In coming out of this action, whose termination had just been so fatal to us, a frightful tempest attacked both conquerors and conquered. Every moment it seemed that we were about to be engulfed in the bottomless abyss; the most fearless were aware of the imminence of the danger. In the midst

of the desolation on the deck crowded with people, a cabin-boy laughed outright on looking at Mr. Maitland. He perceiving it, notwithstanding the sorrowful prognostications which besieged his mind, said to the boy in a brutal tone: 'Why do you look at me and laugh?' 'Commander,' replied the cabin-boy, 'as we are all going to be plunged into the sea presently, I was thinking of the effect that your nose would produce when the water should reach it. It would, without doubt, like a burning coal, smoke, smoke.' We could not help laughing at this man, notwithstanding the recklessness that could prompt a joke in such a perilous moment. Contrary to all expectation, the violence of the wind suddenly ceased, and we were rescued from a watery grave. The fleet pursued its way and all was restored to order, but the cabin-boy received a dozen lashes for being a little too gay on the subject of his commander's nose. The severity that they used in regard to this poor devil made me fear for myself a like fate. My apprehensions were ill-founded; the English treated me with courtesy; but they were not willing to release me until the end of four years, which appeared to me of a frightful length."

"Sir Knight," said Madame de Rabasteins, "this second captivity should have disgusted you with sea service."

"Indeed," replied the train-bearer, "on my return to France I asked for my retiring pension, and went to live in Niort, my native town. I was able to col-

lect together the remains of a very modest fortune that my old mother had dispensed very badly. I saw the gay world of Niort, and I attended the musical parties which were in fashion at that time, and I took my part with the flute. Among the number of persons that I saw there the most frequently was a banker, a most complete original, an old bachelor, and most singularly music-mad. He owned a very pretty house whose front alone had cost more than the whole building. Four Corinthian columns decorated this entrance, which seemed to lead to a princely palace instead of the dwelling of a simple citizen. All the town talked of this portico so recently finished. I went one day to pay a visit to the banker, whom gout retained a prisoner to his room, and spoke to him of his house, as a very sure means of flattering the self-love of the financier. 'If you wish,' said he to me, 'I will sell you a life interest in it.' 'Ah, sir, you jest, without doubt; I am worth next to nothing.' 'Never mind, you are a brave officer. I should be charmed with you, because you are so useful and agreeable. I have no near relative, and the term of my life has almost drawn to a close; this is the arrangement that I propose to you. Unfortunately, I am not able to go out; you will come every day to my house after my dinner, and you will play the flute for one hour, but you will only play the airs that I tell you, of which I will furnish you the music; the least negligence on your part will suffice to annul the contract; a serious ill-

ness, well ascertained, will alone be admitted as an excuse; and, after my death, this house with its superb portico will become your property.'

"I believed at first that he was joking; but he spoke seriously. I rejoiced, for nothing appeared to me easier than the accomplishment of a compact so simple. I accepted it courageously; the different articles of the contract were drawn up in writing forthwith, and signed by the two contracting parties. I went then to play the flute for one hour at the house of the hypochondriac, who directed me to play a series of the most stupid, the most languishing, the most sickening airs that it was possible to imagine. I asked to be allowed to vary the catalogue; the man refused obstinately, recalling the conditions of the treaty.

"At the end of a few weeks, I perceived that the chain was heavier than I had at first believed, and what was most distracting, my tyrannical adversary seemed to return to life; one would have believed that the notes of my flute exercised over his nerves a magical effect. His pale, wan face bloomed out again; his dull eyes sparkled with light. As for me, I experienced sensations entirely opposite; an indefinable uneasiness oppressed my whole being. I asked as a favor permission to make some changes; I could not obtain it. No despot ever exercised his power in so unmerciful a manner. My friends grew alarmed, for I became attenuated before their eyes, and my sprightliness totally disappeared; neverthe-

less the prospect of possessing in a short time a house whose sale would assure me of a comfortable existence, sustained my courage. I pursued my task for eight months; but by this time I was no longer in a condition to continue, I had no more breath; I fled from Niort, and sent the hypochondriac and his portico flying. For a long time these detestable airs burdened my ears, and the remembrance of them still makes me shudder."

"The banker without doubt died a short time after your flight from Niort?" asked my mother.

"Not at all, madam," replied he; "this event took place six years ago, and my tyrant still lives. They assured me that he had tried to make other dupes. As for me I shall never be tempted to leave Bishop du Bellay to go and reclaim the ratification of our treaty."

This train-bearer called himself the Knight of the Bouchetière. He took care to tell us that one of his ancestors was killed at the feet of King John at the battle of Poictiers, a circumstance which was scarcely worth the trouble of recollecting. Not only was M. de la Bouchetière very amusing in relating the tribulations of his life, but he knew also how to defend with warmth the glory of his country. Among the number of persons who were then visiting at the house of the Bishop of Fréjus, was the Marquis de Rietti, who was particularly distinguished, and who filled in Avignon one of the highest positions in the Papal administration. This stranger took pleasure

in speaking in the most injurious terms of Louis XIV; he even showed a ridiculous and stubborn animosity. The company disdained, without doubt, through politeness, to oppose his opinions. At last M. de la Bouchetière, pushed to the extremity, said to him: "Do you know, sir, that the cross of St. Louis, suspended from the buttonhole of my coat, places me under an obligation of defending the memory of the monarch who has founded the military order of which I am proud to carry the badge? Let us see, now, what are the wrongs that you impute to Louis XIV."

"The first," replied M. Rietti, with warmth, "was of having completely ruined my country, Avignon; first, in placing it under sequestration five or six times during his reign, and, in the second place, in destroying the industry of the town by means of an odious proceeding."

"I confess," replied M. de la Bouchetière, "that I am completely ignorant of this particular fact; deign to let us hear it."

"Willingly; you are not ignorant in the least, sir, that Louis XIV came to visit the southern provinces of his kingdom in the winter of 1660 with Anne of Austria, his mother?"

"Permit me, M. de Rietti," replied the train-bearer. "I know perfectly well the details of this journey, and you, as a good Catholic, and as a citizen of Avignon, you should thank the King for having delivered you at this time from most dis-

agreeable neighbors, in expelling from Orange the Dutch garrison that the House of Nassau kept in this town for a very long time. This troop, composed entirely of Huguenots, were spread abroad through the country, and pillaged the poor inhabitants; they carried their ravages as far as the ramparts of Avignon; many times the vice-legate was obliged to implore the assistance of the governor of the province. Louis XIV was not content with chasing the Dutch garrison from Orange; he demolished, stone by stone, the formidable citadel that the princes of Nassau had erected at great expense, and that they insolently decorated with the title of *Broken Heart of the Catholics;* from this moment, thanks to the intervention of the King of France, your countrymen had no longer anything to fear from these continual attacks which troubled their repose. Now continue, I beg, the enumeration of the wrongs with which you reproach Louis XIV."

M. de Rietti, slightly confused, continued, saying: "I respect your observation, and I do not refuse to declare that the destruction of the citadel of Orange was a true service rendered the country. Here is, however, another incident that I cannot regard as a service. Louis XIV and his mother having made a pretty long sojourn at Aix, manifested a desire to pass the Holy Week in Avignon. The vice-legate sent to the prince his first officer to announce to him that they would be too happy to receive the King of France. Our city counted then in her midst eighty

thousand inhabitants. The manufactures of silk and velvet gave employment to thirty thousand workmen from the interior, or from the villages in the suburbs. Every one was filled with zeal to give to the very Christian King a reception worthy of him. The manufacturers of stuffs carpeted the bridge of St. Benazet, which still exists, with pieces of velvet of the most brilliant colors, whose ends hung down into the Rhone. Thus Louis XIV passed really over velvet the whole length of the bridge. My father witnessed this solemnity; he told me, I should confess it, that all the spectators were astonished at the grace and beauty of this prince, who was then only twenty-eight years of age.* The most humble citizen of Avignon put himself to some expense in order that this reception should be agreeable to the sovereign who was the object of it.

"Do you know how he repaid this heartfelt reception? by destroying the prosperity of our city. Instead of passing a week in Avignon, as it had been announced, Louis XIV passed an entire month there, by design, and during this sojourn the prince and the worthy ministers who accompanied him, employed all imaginable means to bribe with money the head workmen and the thousands of operatives on silk stuffs; he had them led under escort into Languedoc, and distributed them between Lyons,

* Two months after this Louis XIV married Marie Thérèse of Austria.

Nimes, and Tours. Some years later Colbert overbid his master and exhausted the same sources. From this moment our manufactures declined rapidly, and to-day Avignon counts scarcely forty thousand inhabitants, and they preserve there a proverb appropriate to the circumstance: 'God save us from a northwest wind and the visits of the King of France.'

"Do you believe now," said M. de Rietti, in conclusion, "that my recriminations are well founded?"

"I cannot deny," replied M. de la Bouchetière, "the justice of your reasoning. As a countryman of Avignon you have cause to complain; as for me, as a Frenchman, I ought to thank you for enlightening me on the score of Louis XIV, about things that many of my fellow-countrymen are certainly ignorant, and I am of that number. These particulars increase still more the admiration that I profess for this monarch. Your recital has proved to me that in the midst of the intoxication of feasts and adulation, this prince, still so young, never lost sight of the true interests of his country."

This judicious reflection terminated the quarrel, and the rest of the company thanked the amiable train-bearer warmly for having so well defended the memory of the great King.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS AND HIS MOTHER GO TO CANNES—TOUCHING EPISODE OF THE IRON MASK.

THE next day we bade adieu to the town of Fréjus, with the intention of reaching Cannes, the last stage of our journey. The journey that we were about commencing would be very long, not precisely on account of the length of the road, but by reason of the difficulties without number which presented themselves on this route. The bishop insisted upon our taking with us two horse-guards of the Marshalsea as an escort, for it was necessary to cross the forest of Esterel, an habitual asylum for the criminals of Provence. At the end of three hours' travel we arrived at the centre of this forest, where we found relays of post-stages; picket soldiers of the Marshalsea guarded it constantly. At the moment of our entrance into this place an extreme commotion reigned there; the robbers, whose audacity respects nothing, had carried off two horses from the stables of this

stopping-place. My mother, horribly fatigued with the jolting of the carriage, wished to rest for two hours at this house.

The sun commenced to decline when we set out from Esterel; two new horse-guards of the Marshalsea had relieved those that we had taken at Fréjus; my mother called them dragoons. The forest, whose landscape was only remarkable for gloom, took at this moment the most sinister aspect; enormous fir trees spread out their gigantic branches. These trees presented some very odd groups: some had the appearance of a gallows to which were suspended the corpses of the condemned; others, stripped of their branches, presented the form of greasy poles, up which hideous skeletons were climbing. The rays of the setting sun shed a livid color over this fantastic scene. These strange images so struck my imagination that I scarcely dared breathe. Large ravines, rushing torrents, and steep precipices intersected the route that we were travelling; no human being appeared in our way; we heard no sound save the noise that our carriage and the horse's feet made; this noise was mingled occasionally with the roaring of wild beasts which filled the woods.

My mother appeared crushed under the weight of sorrowful reflections. She had just drawn from her pocket a rosary, when the carriage was upset in a pond that the postilion did not know how to avoid. Scarcely were we extricated from this difficulty than I uttered, involuntarily, a cry of fright. My mother

sprang towards me to know the cause of my terror. On turning, after the commotion, I found myself in the presence of a most singular being, who held herself cramped up and hanging to the carriage door. It was a sort of young woman, with dishevelled hair, covered with rags, and who had only one arm. She looked at us with haggard eyes, articulating some provincial words unintelligable to me. One of our horsemen was walking, and holding his horse by the bridle, he said to us: "Fear nothing, it is only Manon; give her six small pieces of silver, and she will take herself off very quickly."

I hastened to throw some pieces of money to the other side of the road. The woman jumped lightly to the ground, seized her prey with avidity, and sank down among the underwood, casting upon us the most frightful glances.

"Dragoon," said my mother, leaning on the carriage door, "will you be so good as to tell us who is this Manon?"

The horseman approaching the carriage, said: "Manon is the daughter of a woodcutter. She had received the betrothal ring, when she fell from a high tree, breaking the left arm, and amputation became necessary. The pain of the operation did not make her forget the ring. She demanded with great persistency that they should take it off the dead hand, and put it on one of the fingers of the right hand. Her intended, a woodcutter like the father, did not wish to marry a woman who could not work, so he

wedded another. At this, Manon became crazy, and here she is."

This history was related in a savage voice, which increased the kind of terror that I experienced in the midst of these dark passes. My mother having buried herself in the carriage, said to me in a low voice, "This military man is less pathetic in the recital of his little epic than M. de Montdragon."

At last we emerged from this frightful forest of Esterel just at the moment when the veil of night enveloped all nature. We journeyed still for some time before reaching Cannes. This little town rose upon a parallel line with the seashore. We possessed in the neighborhood some pretty considerable domains, but there were no buildings on them. We therefore lodged at the house of M. La Croix, the bailiff of the property, a man who had great experience in law and who had regulated and attended to all the business of my uncle, the baronet, for thirty years. The windows of our apartments opened on the quay; the sea stretched before us out of sight. This spectacle, entirely new for me, excited in the highest degree my astonishment. The day after our arrival, I remained all the morning lounging on one of the balconies. My mother, placed beside me, enjoyed the pleasure which this imposing scene seemed to cause me, and the helplessness which prevented her from enjoying it herself, did not draw from her the least murmur against the harshness of her fate.

I discovered in front of me, towards the extremity

of the horizon, a dark mass, which seemed to balance itself in the midst of the billows; from the bosom of this mass sprang up a group of high houses. For a long time I sought, vainly, to explain to myself what this could be, when M. La Croix entered the room, coming, as he said, to take the orders of Madame de Rabasteins. I hastened to question him on the subject of this foggy line which I perceived before me.

"These are the islands of Terins," replied he; "the one which presents itself first to our sight is called St. Marguerite; it is used for the state prisoners."

When pronouncing these last words the bailiff sensibly lowered his voice as if he feared that some one would hear him. My mother, the least incident awakening her curiosity, commenced saying: "Explain to us, sir, the difference which exists between the state prisoners and the other prisoners."

"The first," replied the bailiff, "are very often very good people, who have nothing in common with thieves and assassins. They are guilty of political crimes, upon the gravity of which the King alone pronounces as a last resort. They generally shut up these persons in fortresses designed for this use; the island of St. Marguerite is one of them. I saw set out for this island," continued M. La Croix, "forty-seven years ago,—I was then twenty-one,—a most mysterious being, whom they detained in the fortress for twelve years. The magistrates of Cannes had

put in requisition fifteen large barges to conduct to the island the suite of the governor, and the soldiers who escorted him. The announcement of this expedition produced a certain agitation through the country. Impelled by curiosity, I entreated the master of one of these barges to admit me on board in the capacity of oarsman. Having obtained it I dressed myself as a sailor. Our little fleet, directed by a pilot, cast anchor at the foot of the ramparts of the fortress. We found there the large ship's boat in attendance and a gunboat, armed for battle, recently arrived from the Antilles. At the end of a few moments' waiting, we saw pass out from the castle gate a group of officers who crowded around a sedan chair hermetically closed. The governor, a terrible man, and already very old, wished that they should place the sedan chair, as it was, on board the ship's boat in attendance. They observed to him that it was a thing impossible on account of the violence of the wind. The embarkation charged with this additional burden ran the risk of being capsized.

"The governor, whom they called M. St. Mars, having consulted for a few moments, ordered the soldiers to turn back as far as the ramparts, and to right-about in such a manner as to turn the back to the sea. Then he opened himself the sedan chair, and caused a man to come out wrapped up in a large cloak, and his head covered with an old gray hat with a large brim, without feathers or ornaments. Nothing indicated in a precise manner the age of

the prisoner; nevertheless, his uncertain step and the bend of his back, made you believe that he was rather old than young. The vessel on which I was aboard, and the ship's boat in attendance, went in consort, which permitted me to see very distinctly all that passed in this latter embarkation.

"At the moment when the prisoner was seating himself on the bench, there came up a squall of wind which took off his large old hat. We saw then the head of the unknown: it was completely wrapped up in a head-dress of black velvet, which was drawn down over the whole face; the mask was fastened behind by means of clasps of steel, which were very large and elastic; these clasps extended down under the ears. They had made in the velvet, which covered the face, some openings for the eyes, the mouth, and the nose. The governor himself hastened to replace the hat upon the head of this strange personage.

"The squadron, filled with soldiers, arrived as far as the strand of Cannes, where was a large litter surrounded with platoons of cavalry, who had been stationed there since morning. M. de St.-Mars caused the prisoner to mount it and placed himself opposite. This litter, which was also as carefully closed as the sedan chair, took the direction to Fréjus; the horsemen of the escort did not cease carrying their swords unsheathed. Several persons had seen, as well as myself, the steel clasps which fastened behind the prisoner's velvet head-dress.

They related this peculiarity, exaggerating the size of these metal springs. This rumor, which grew beyond all belief from the most simple things, did not fail to publish that this mysterious personage wore constantly an iron mask." After these words, the bailiff became suddenly silent, like a man astonished at having said so much.

My mother listened to M. La Croix as attentively as possible; not hearing him speak any longer, she took up in her turn the thread of the discourse, saying:

"M. Bailiff, you must absolutely tell us all that you know about this prisoner. I wish it, I ask it as a favor?"

M. La Croix did not reply. Madame de Rabasteins returned to the charge, making use of the most engaging expressions. She would have liked to have been able to act on this occasion, as at the relay at Flassans, and to say, "I will pay for another post." This means would have been impracticable on such an occurrence. The bailiff, overcome by the solicitations that were addressed to him with so much warmth, showed himself disposed to satisfy the impatience of the Baroness de Rabasteins; he commenced, as a preamble, by assuring himself of the doors being closed, and asked permission to shut the windows.

"I am very intimately acquainted," said he, "with M. de Latil, who, during the past year, has filled the position of major of the Isle of St. Marguerite.

This officer, thirty years of age, succeeded in this post an old man, who filled the same situation for half a century, and witnessed, as well as myself, the departure of the masked prisoner (1698). Last spring M. de Latil, profiting by a momentary absence of the governor, had the kindness to let me visit the interior of the island as well as the prisoners, a favor which I had vainly solicited until this period. I hastened at once to question him about this illustrious stranger, of whom my contemporaries had preserved the remembrance throughout the country. He related to me part of some versions, more or less singular, which were circulated as well among the vulgar as in the higher classes, adding the curious information that his predecessor had furnished him with. All that I have gathered upon this subject has not convinced me, and the problem remains to be solved. I believe, nevertheless, that this prisoner must have been a prince of the royal blood, to whose fate in some way was connected the destinies of the state; for, in every other hypothesis, one must have taxed with folly the measures of safety taken in his regard, as well as the enormous expenses that they involved. They had built expressly for him a prison in the island of St. Marguerite, on the seashore, but opposite to the massive erections which arose in front of Cannes, and which served to lodge the governor, his officers, and a part of the garrison. A vast esplanade separates this large building from the houses of the pavilion belonging to the iron mask.

I have penetrated into this building, thanks to the kindness of M. de Latil. The plan was an oblong; the first door opened into a corridor, formed from the exterior wall and an interior partition; three rooms on the ground-floor occupied the whole length of this corridor; the room at the end, looking to the north, was used as the special habitation of the pupil of M. de St. Mars, to use the expression of the period. This room, eight feet in length, had only one window, which opened upon a mass of rocks, against which the sea dashed. This window, built in the thickness of the wall, was protected by a double row of iron bars on the side looking on the sea, and by a grating on the interior of the prison.

"At the end of the corridor, opposite to the door which opened on the yard, they had established an altar. Above the door on the wall was the image of the Blessed Virgin painted in fresco. A priest almost blind was saying the mass of the Blessed Virgin; he saw well enough to distinguish the host and the particles. The poor prisoner walked sometimes in this corridor, under the guard nevertheless of the governor. His tastes declared him to be a man born in the most elevated class of society, and they spared nothing to satisfy them. He liked very fine linen, and used a great deal of almond paste, perfumed water, and cosmetics. They served his meals on vessels of plate; a distinction very remarkable. On the day of his departure from the island of St. Marguerite, they burnt carefully the furniture which

decorated his prison; they even melted the silver. The chamber was scratched, and rubbed down, and scappled into the shafts of the stone.

"The guardian of this noble captive was M. de St. Mars, general officer, of a most intractable character; this guardian was never changed, and outlived, it is said, the unfortunate one over whose fate he had watched for the space of thirty-two years.

"Here is an anecdote relating to M. de St. Mars:

"At his request they placed in the Antibes, in the capacity of lieutenant of the King, one of his old companions in arms named M. de Bussières. This officer had a son, thirteen years of age, remarkable for his vivacity and prettiness. M. de St. Mars loved this child dearly, whose sallies of wit diverted him; he sent for him frequently by the ship's boat, which was in attendance, and plied between the island of St. Marguerite and the Antibes. It is about two leagues from one place to the other by doubling the large cape. The society of this child was the only distraction that the governor could procure for himself. A superior order interdicted the entrance to the island to every one. During one of these visits the young Bussières, left for some time to himself, commenced to ferret about in every corner of the island, which was only half a league long; he reached the door of the room reserved for the masked captive. Through an inexplicable forgetfulness they had left it unlocked; the child put out his hand and timidly opened the door to see to

what place this entrance led. At this moment the interesting prisoner was enjoying, without doubt with delight, the rare pleasure of walking about with his face uncovered in this corridor under the formidable guard of St. Mars. He, perceiving on the door-sill the little rogue, uttered a cry of anger, sprang forward to meet him, and pushing him threw him out in the corridor, the door of which this time he closed carefully. A few moments after St. Mars sent the young Bussières to Antibes, accompanied by an officer, who conveyed to the lieutenant of the King a note couched in these terms: 'I send you back your son, my friend. If he had been one year older you would have never seen him again.'"

"This note was found among the papers of the commander of the Antibes, when his death necessitated the destruction of all written matter found among his effects. Several persons have known of this note

"I will finish my narration," said the bailiff, "by one last feature. In spite of the great mystery which enveloped the interior life of the prisoner, it was remarkable that M. de St. Mars, this general officer of a character as proud as inflexible, treated him with a deference without equal, and spoke of him in terms most respectful. Two persons alone were detained in his service near the captive, his own nephew, M. de Palteau, and an officer named M. de Rosarges.

"A valet, as skilful as intelligent, was occupied

with the most painful details. This man could not go out in the middle of the corridor. I ought to add that the ramparts were decorated with several pieces of artillery; the bombardiers held themselves always ready to fire upon any barks or vessels which might approach too near the fortress. St. Mars had the order to put the prisoner to death if he discovered to any stranger his rank, and they had not left him ignorant of the latter. Aside from this severity, the instructions of the minister Louvois directed the governor to comply as much as possible with the least desires of his host.

"The unfortunate was advancing in age; his long captivity and the want of exercise had injured his health. At the moment when they expected it the least, the valet, who had attended him from the beginning of his captivity, fell ill and died at the expiration of a few days. The prisoner profited by this unhappy circumstance to demand with earnestness the more gentle care of a woman. The governor of the island of St. Marguerite did not dare, of his own will, to satisfy him upon a point so delicate. He informed M. de Barbezieux, who had replaced M. de Louvois, of it; he referred it to the King. Several official papers prove that the King interfered every time that it was necessary to take a decisive measure in regard to the prisoner.

"An extraordinary courier brought the authority to place near the captive a countrywoman of humble condition, and who, in view of a brilliant recom-

pense, would be willing to consecrate the rest of her life to the service of the stranger. But this woman must resign herself to give up the world and never see any one again—to be separated from her own forever; in fact to die in the prison, even should the man in the iron mask precede her to the tomb. The difficulty consisted in finding a woman generous enough to sacrifice herself in the hope of enriching her family.

"Several women whom they thought to seduce by the allurement of gain repulsed the proposition. However, a peasant from the village of Mongins agreed to it; but at the moment of setting foot on the vessel which was to carry her to the island of St. Marguerite, she withdrew and demanded with most lamentable cries permission to return to her own rustic roof. At last the widow of a fisherman, thirty-five years of age, consented to immolate herself in order to secure a living for five children whom her husband had left her—a true image of the symbolical pelican of the Christians!"

"Yes, the pelican! That expression is very just," said Madame de Rabasteins, rising quickly from her arm-chair. "A mother is alone capable of a devotion so sublime."

"We have still among us," added M. La Croix, "one of the sons of this widow."

"I wish to see him; I wish to see him," cried the Baroness, transported with enthusiasm. "M. Bailiff,

beg him to come and see us; what pleasure I shall have in talking with him?"

M. La Croix observed that this man could not be free until towards evening, as he was obliged to wait until he fulfilled his duties in the tax bureau, where he was employed.

Madame de Rabasteins passed the rest of the day in singular impatience. Night having arrived, the bailiff was summoned to keep his promise before supper. M. La Croix went out, and at the end of a half-hour he returned, accompanied by the employé, who was called Olive; he was an old man, rather tall, who appeared to be about sixty-five years of age; his physiognomy, otherwise quite animated, bore the impress of a deep melancholy, which seemed produced by the distant remembrance of some great misfortune.

Madame de Rabasteins received the employé with a most benevolent air, and begged him in a most engaging manner to relate to us the beautiful trait of devotion for which his mother was so illustrious. Olive appeared to hesitate a moment, casting around him some uneasy glances, as if he feared that some indiscreet persons might hear him. Olive trembled on commencing his recital:

"My father, an old sailor in the royal marine service, profited by peace to return to Cannes, his native country, and established himself there as a fisherman. He married there and died at the end of fourteen years in consequence of a sickness, which, by pro-

longing his life beyond all bound, finished by exhausting the feeble resources of his family. The barge and all the nets had to be sold.

"My mother remained burdened with the care of five children, of whom the eldest, who was a girl, was just entering her thirteenth year; the youngest scarcely walked. The obligation of procuring a living for this number of children prevented my mother from yielding to the weight of grief; an unequalled energy developed itself suddenly at the home of this naturally very timid woman. Notwithstanding the extreme weariness which overcame her, she found means of being properly clothed, and of keeping her children upon a comfortable footing. Some charitable persons granted her some slight assistance; however, the wants increased according as we grew, and, to provide for them, my mother wore herself out in vain efforts. The whole population of Cannes felt a lively interest in her fate; all eyes were turned towards the widow, when, on Sunday, she appeared at church, escorted by her five children; each one of us wearing on our miserable clothing some apparent sign of mourning for our father, if it was only a strip of black crape.

"One day, towards two o'clock, M. ——, the bailiff, came into the room which we occupied in common. The major of the isle of St. Marguerite accompanied him. This unexpected visit produced among us a very natural surprise. The astonishment redoubled when the bailiff expressed to my mother

the desire of speaking to her without her children, by whom she was surrounded, hearing him. My mother, all trembling, pushed us gently into one of the corners of the room; the two youngest were stretched out asleep upon the same low bed; my sister, my brother, and myself remained standing in our corner without losing a single movement of the two gentlemen so well dressed.

"We remarked that my mother became extremely pale, then abundant tears flowed from her eyes.

"'Madam,' continued Olive, 'M. La Croix, at whose house we are, has told you that M. de St. Mars was looking for a woman to take care of a prisoner of distinction.' They promised her a handsome recompense; but at what a price! Good God! an anticipated death! The bailiff, first magistrate of the country, having been able to appreciate the character of the fisherman's widow, had judged her capable of immolating herself for the love of her children.

"In short, the third day after this visit,—I shall never forget this day; it was the 14th of September, 1692,—my mother, having gone out early, returned after a long absence, and distributed to all of us some cake, a treat entirely new to us. She embraced us a thousand times with a sort of frenzy. She begged my sister and myself, the only ones able to understand her, to take care of our brothers; and, above all, not to forget to say our morning and evening prayers; then, having embraced us again and again,

my mother rose quickly, and fled from our room. We never saw her again."

Some painfully stifled sobs prevented Olive from continuing his narration. Our tears flowed simultaneously; no expression can render the pathetic simplicity of the words spoken by this man. At the end of a few moments he recommenced his recital:

"One hour after the departure of our mother, two women from the town, whom we knew to be her friends, entered the room, and took us home with them to play with their children. The bailiff named as our tutor a distant relative. They counted out to him two hundred pistoles for each one of us, charging him to take care of us, to provide for our wants, and to administer this little fortune, that we owed to the noble sacrifice of our mother.

"The head of this family of orphans was a woman, my eldest sister, Miette, thirteen years of age. A certain energy of character commenced to develop itself in this young girl, and this energy was united very strongly to an angelic candor. At the end of a few months some indiscreet confidence unveiled to her eyes the mystery which covered the fate of her mother; in vain some compassionate friends tried to make her hope for her return. Miette did not misunderstand our misfortune; she understood it entirely. It caused her often fits of melancholy, which ended in deep despair. When one of these crises commenced, she dragged us all four to the seashore, made us kneel down, and extending our arms towards

the fortress, of which we could see the ramparts, we would call our mother. Sometimes Miette, whose imagination was easily excited, would say to us:

"'Look, my brothers, below there, upon the bastion; my mother is there, I see her, she makes a sign to us.'

"Then we would commence to cry altogether, we would clap our hands; but the sad reality was not slow in appearing to us, the illusion ceased, and we would fall on the shore exhausted with fatigue; some charitable people would run and lead us back to the house.

"I knew, without doubt, that my mother had made several attempts to escape from the island; the watchfulness of the governor rendered them useless. The deep grief which the privation of her children caused her, led her to the tomb sooner than she herself believed when taking this sad step. Six years after this cruel separation M. ——, the bailiff, came to find us, and make known to us, to my sister and myself, our irreparable loss. Our dear mother had ceased to live.

"Miette had entered into her nineteenth year; on receiving the communication of the bailiff, she uttered a cry of fright; by a sudden movement we grouped ourselves all around her, as if to feel her grief.

"M. ——, the bailiff, waited until the violence of an affliction so just was a little calmed, then he

placed upon the table a leather purse filled with louisd'ors.

"'Here,' said he, 'is a sum which belongs to you; these are the entire wages of your mother that she had amassed. I am charged to give them to you.'

"'We do not wish this money,' cried Miette, with fire; 'it is the price of the blood of our mother; take it away; we do not wish it.'

It seems to me," continued Olive, "that I still hear the noise that these pieces of gold made in falling; their sound had something in it sorrowful and plaintive.

"My sister insisted before the bailiff that we should ask to have the clothes which our mother wore returned to us; they had been burnt in lime. Some years after the departure of the man in the iron mask, I obtained, through the intercession of one of the officers of the fortress, permission to go through the island. I sought vainly for the tomb of my mother, in order to pray there for her; no sign enabled me to discover it."

Olive had strongly moved us by his recital. Madame de Rabasteins, very much affected, asked him: "What has become of Miette, this worthy sister?"

"She lives yet, thank God, although very old. A hotel-keeper from Luc sought her in marriage a few years after the death of our mother. Miette agreed to the proposition, imposing, nevertheless, upon her future husband one condition, namely: that the sign of the hotel should be changed, and

that they should substitute for the Golden Lion a Pelican, who was opening her breast with her beak, to nourish with her blood her five little ones."

"Good woman!" cried Madame de Rabasteins. "I hope, M. Olive," continued she, "that in memory of the virtue of your heroic mother, you have never failed to say your morning prayers."

CHAPTER V.

HISTORY OF THE TRAIN-BEARER OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF AIX—THE CASTLE OF SUZE—PETER DUFOUR, SERGEANT OF THE REGIMENT OF BEAUZE, AND HIS BROTHER JAMES—MDLLE. DE PRACONTAL DIES ON THE DAY OF HER MARRIAGE WITH M. DE QUINSONNAS.

WE left Cannes on the 12th of September, 1744, and again we passed through the horrible forest of Esterel; this time Manon did not appear to us. After having passed through the smiling town of Brignolles without accident, we reached Aix towards evening. Monseigneur de Brancas occupied the Archiepiscopal See; the family of the Rabasteins had had with his family some business quarrels, which were put an end to by several decrees of Parliament. The decision of this supreme court was against my relations; nevertheless, my mother deemed it convenient to pay a visit to our happy adversary; she solicited permission to do so by a very respectful note, that I wrote in her name. The Archbishop sent his secretary immediately, and several sedan chairs to lead us to the Episcopal palace. The prelate showed in his reception a perfect grace; he was an old man of

beautiful and imposing bearing; they called him the great story-teller.

When the first and customary compliments were exhausted, Madame de Rabasteins asked Monseigneur de Brancas, with a very singular eagerness, if he had a train-bearer.

"My faith! no," replied the Archbishop, "two have died on my hands in less than three years; I wish no more of them; I fear for them an epizootic. May I dare to ask you, madam, to what end you address to me such a question?"

"It is that I regard a train-bearer as a very amusing character," replied my mother.

"Not always," replied Monseigneur de Brancas, "and if you will permit me, I am going to prove it to you by the history of the latter, who they called the Knight of St. Yves. He was descended, I think, from the race of Atrides, for fortune did not cease to follow him with severity; his misfortunes were not, however, as tragical as those of the family of Agamemnon: murder and adultery were not mingled in any manner with them; but this man saw himself perpetually exposed to bad luck, which seemed to adhere to him. The best combination of enterprises failed through a chain of unforeseen circumstances. Two or three marriages failed the very evening of the ceremony. Here is a description of his misfortunes:

"The Knight, having lost his patrimony, subsisted by means of a pension, which was paid to him by several united relations. During one of the latter

summers of his life, he repaired to the waters of Barèges, in order to find some diversion for his weariness. The brilliant society which was then assembled at the Pyrenees, received him with marked kindness. Among the number of bathers was remarked a lady of about fifty years of age, who had never been pretty. She lived without a servant, a countrywoman waiting on her by the week. The fashionables of Barèges took very little notice of her, although her manners were distinguished. The Knight was the only one who did not abandon her; when near her he showed her the most marked attentions. This lady was suffering from the first attacks of dropsy. The end of the season was approaching, the signal for departure was soon given. The invalid said to her agreeable guest:

"'I am deeply touched, sir, with the infinite kindness that you have shown me; there remains for me only one last favor to ask you; this is perhaps very indiscreet, but heaven will recompense you for such a generous devotion.'

"'Madam, what can I do for you?'

"'I am alone, suffering very much; would you be magnanimous enough to sacrifice yourself by conducting me back to my modest dwelling at Montauban? You will have at first to travel thirty leagues in my company, and then three times as many to reach the city of Aix?'

"The Knight was at first perfectly astounded at this proposition; but, finally, his good heart inspired

him to give a favorable answer. Our two travellers set out. M. de Saint Yves lavished the most touching attentions upon the invalid, which were perfectly disinterested. What was his astonishment when they arrived at the gates of Montauban to find, on descending from the public coach, a handsome carriage, and servants, who conducted the lady and her Knight to a magnificent house, where all the surroundings breathed of wealth!

"'Sir,' said the invalid, 'I have deceived you; I am less uncomfortable and ill than I may have appeared at the waters of Barèges. Your loyal conduct has excited my gratitude. Will you at first accept at my house a living exempt from all care? A little later we will make other arrangements.'

"At the end of two months the condition of the dropsical patient grew worse in a most alarming manner. She said to M. de Saint Yves:

"'My natural heirs are collaterals very far removed, who in my opinion have very serious faults. My fortune is twenty thousand pounds a year. I wish to leave it all to you, less a few legacies to my servants and to the poor of my parish. It is necessary then for me to make a will in my own hand, but I am ignorant of the manner in which it should be drawn up; gather for me upon this subject all the necessary information. Here are the names of my people.'

"M. de Saint Yves went to a lawyer, who gave him the exact form, from which the Knight con-

structed a model of the will. He gave it to the lady, recommending her to copy this paper with great exactness, without adding or leaving out anything, and to immediately burn the model; for the validity of the will would be at once contested, if they could bring forward the proof that this act had been dictated by a perfect stranger. This advice was followed very strictly. The will, having been sealed, was placed in the hands of a notary in trust.

"The dropsical patient died the following month. M. de Saint Yves, fifty years of age or more, was about to find at last a just recompense for all the hardships that fate had never ceased overwhelming him with up to this time. He began to hold up his head, and found himself sufficiently presentable to contract a union with some young woman; his choice was even already made. The reading of the will had taken place. The dropsical patient had shown herself so docile in conforming to the instructions of the Knight, that she omitted the name of the residuary legatee in copying the model; for M. de Saint Yves, guided by a very laudable sentiment of delicacy, had left his name in blank. The natural heirs, whom the testatrix wished to keep out of their just titles, took possession of their rights, thanks to this fatal forgetfulness. The Knight was forced to decamp very quickly from the house. They scarcely allowed him the privilege of taking away his clothes. He returned to Aix plunged in despair. His pitiable condition touched my heart. I admitted him into

my house in the capacity of train-bearer; but the blow had been too severe. The grief brought on a liver complaint, which carried him off at the end of five months."

On leaving Aix, we directed our steps towards Tarascon, in order to avoid Avignon, and we again passed the Rhone at the bridge of the Holy Ghost, where we had crossed it six weeks before. We made haste to reach the domain of St. Peter, situated a few leagues from St. Paul, of the three castles at the entrance of the Dauphiné, on coming from the principality of Orange. This excursion, at the end of the province, had singularly fatigued Madame de Rabasteins; she desired perfect rest. Our house was just about being made ready by some intelligent servants, of whom the principal one was called Hubert.

A slow fever took hold of my mother from the time that she established herself in her house at St. Peter. In the midst of her sufferings this angelic woman thought still of procuring for me the means of recreation. The name of the terrible Baron of Adrets, the ancient chief of the Protestants of the Dauphiné, was always remembered by the inhabitants of this part of the country. The most of the neighboring castles had been restored since peace had procured calm for these provinces that had been desolated for so long a time by civil war. We will name, for its elegance, that of Suze, which belonged to one of the oldest families of the province. They gave me permission to visit it, conducted by the

faithful Hubert; this project caused me true joy. The next day in the morning, my mother, according to her custom, made me say my prayers near her bed; then we set out, Hubert and I, both on our horses.

After having travelled three hours through a very wild, rude country, we had to make a long ascent in order to arrive at the castle of Suze, which was built upon a table-land, at the foot of which wound the river Lez; this table-land was covered with a wood of thorny trees. Nothing could have been wilder than this place, and nothing was as beautiful and, at the same time, so graceful as the castle. Its interior court was ornamented with a richly sculptured gallery, which led to the most magnificent staircase that I have ever seen. M. de Suze received me with kindness, and showed me through his sumptuous dwelling; when returning, he insisted upon my examining the esplanade in front of the bridge.

"This place," said M. de Suze, "witnessed, in the sixteenth century, a desperate combat, fought by James, my great-great-grandfather, and the famous Baron of Adrets." This chief of the Protestants defied the Lord of Suze, who commanded the Catholics of the province, in proposing to him to close the quarrel before the doorway of his superb castle, in order that he should have a shorter road to travel to be interred in the vault of his ancestors. My ancestor accepted without hesitation this insolent provocation. The duel took place on the same spot upon which

we now stand, in the presence of a hundred men of the two parties. At the end of several violent encounters, the Lord of Suze disarmed his adversary, and threw him to the ground. Then resting the point of his sword on the throat of the conquered one, he said:

"'What would you do, Baron of Adrets, if you were in my place?'

"'I would cut your throat,' replied the ferocious partisan.

"'Ah, well! I will give you your life,' replied my ancestor; 'rise.'

"We preserve carefully in our family," added M. de Suze, "the remembrance of such a memorable action."

Day commenced declining when we returned to the domain of St. Peter. I found that my mother had risen; near her was seated a very venerable old lady, whose face bore the impress of some very severe grief. It was easy for me to see that I had interrupted a conversation whose subject must have been very sad.

"There is your son," said the stranger, "whom God still preserves for you! Like me you deplore the loss of a cherished husband; like me you have only one child; there is in our two positions a certain similarity. I hope that cruel fortune will not render this similarity still more complete."

"Do not finish," cried Madame de Rabasteins, in a heartrending tone; "this similarity could never

exist. While you regret having been born with a very robust constitution, your eyes will assure you, on examining my person, that nature has formed us on this point very unlike; the loss of my husband has already cost me my sight—it was destroyed in a torrent of tears. In me life is like a feeble flame that the least breath could extinguish; could I support the terrible trial which you have been able to resist?"

The stranger rose to take leave of my mother; her tall figure seemed bent in some manner under the weight of years and trouble. The aspect of this lady, dressed in black, caused me to feel a sort of fear, although her face expressed no severity. I followed her with my eyes, without thinking of leading her out. It seemed to me that this stranger left after her a train of misfortunes.

Madame de Rabasteins remained immovable in her arm-chair; her eyes dull and sad, and her fixed look offered at this moment an indefinable expression. I approached to lavish upon her my caresses; she clasped me in her arms, saying:

"My dear Maurice, you must never go near the edge of a precipice."

I asked for an explanation of these words.

"This aged person who has just left here," replied my mother, "is called Madame de Pracontal; she is our nearest neighbor, for the castle next to the house in which we live belongs to her. Her only daughter died the same day of her marriage, thirty years ago.

This young unfortunate one fell into a frightful abyss which extended along the terrace of the Castle of Monségur. Since this catastrophe Madame de Pracontal has left the old residence of her fathers, and confined herself to a modest country house close by the village church; she lives there very retired. The close connection which unites our two families inspired her with the desire to pay me a visit. The interview has lasted several hours, and the conversation has only flowed upon our misfortunes in common, which has nearly broken my heart. But let us put away these mournful thoughts," continued my mother, "and speak only of things more appropriate to the feelings of your age. Has the excursion to the Castle of Suze filled your expectation, my dear child? During your absence, Clotilde has written, under my dictation, to several families who live in the neighborhood; I have informed them of our arrival in this part of the country, begging them to permit their sons to come and see you, since my infirmities forbid me the pleasure of taking you to their houses."

I thanked my mother for her amiable attention, while I congratulated myself much more about to find myself with young people of my own age, as I had never before known this pleasure; my infancy having been passed in a sort of isolation, on account of the extreme solicitude that Madame de Rabasteins showed and felt in regard to her only son.

At the expiration of a week we received from all

the most favorable answers. All of our neighbors seemed eager to comply with the wishes of a woman whose position appeared to them so interesting. They announced to us for the same day the arrival of young Paul de Causans, from the neighborhood of Orange, of the two Geoffres de Montélimart, of Ralph de Rochegerde, of Joseph de Verna, of Pierrelatte, of Géraud de Crussol, from Uzés,—all six jolly companions.

The visit of Madame de Pracontal had excited my mother to a supreme degree; it was followed by those cruel sleepless nights. My uneasiness became greater and greater; I rose frequently to watch near her bed. Thus was passed the greater part of the night which preceded this day, so ardently desired, since it was to procure for me the happiness of making the acquaintance of new friends. Towards four o'clock, the condition of my dear invalid having become more calm, I went by her orders to give myself up to sleep.

The morning was advanced when the neighing of several horses awakened me very awkwardly. I supposed that this noise announced the arrival of my young companions. I dressed myself in great haste, and before descending, I repaired, nevertheless, to the apartment of my mother, with the intention of saying my morning prayers at her bedside, following a custom from which I had never deviated; but Clotilde forbid me to enter her room, saying that her mistress was enjoying at that mo-

ment the most delicious sleep, and that it would be inhuman to disturb her. I retired then noiselessly, and descended to the court by a back stairway. I found myself in the presence of six youths who were overflowing with animal spirits; I embraced them all as old acquaintances, for I loved them without having seen them. However, I granted, from the first glance, an exclusive preference to Paul de Causans, whose pleasant face and jovial manner had charmed me so much.

Following the instructions of Madame de Rabasteins, Hubert served us with a splendid breakfast. At the end of the repast, which was pretty noisy, my companions and myself sprang out into the country like wild horses. After having run up hill and down dale, we resolved to go and examine the Castle of Monségur, the entrance to which was strictly forbidden to every one, but, by virtue of a superior order, the porter allowed us to go all through the interior, and this man received us with very marked politeness. His history is worthy of being related.

He was called Peter Dufour, and was an old sergeant of dragoons of the Corporal Chevert; he had received a gunshot in the leg three years before, at the escalade of Prague, that glorious feat of arms that one is forced to celebrate in verse and prose. Even so grave a wound did not diminish the natural vigor of Peter Dufour, whose loyalty equalled his courage. Madame de Pracontal conceived the good

idea of choosing him as a porter at the Castle of Monségur; she intrusted to him at the same time the entire care of all her domains. The terrible neighborhood of Avignon being ordinarily the refuge of criminals, rendered this part of the Dauphiné very disagreeable to live in. The country swarmed with worthless characters, who amused themselves with devastating the country, and burning those houses that were not well guarded. Madame de Pracontal, whose position as a widow was rendered terrible, saw all her farms attacked by hosts of plunderers; but Peter Dufour, whose authority extended over the other guards, succeeded in repressing the audacity of these bandits, as much by his active vigilance as by a steady firmness. They nicknamed him the New Adrets, on which the dragoon prided himself very much.

He learned, they did not know how, that three rascals from the same parish, very resolute men, were to scale the walls of the castle during the night and introduce themselves into the little summer-house in which he and his family had lived for nearly one year. These villains proposed to strangle him in order to deliver themselves from a very inconvenient watch. They could not make their way into the summer-house except by breaking the shutters of a window which lighted an interior corridor. Dufour posted himself near the window, furnished with a dark lantern and a formidable axe. The care

of sharpening the large edge of his weapon filled up a part of the evening.

The robbers presented themselves towards midnight, the hour of crime, and commenced immediately to set to work. They succeeded, by means of a file, to make a square hole in the shutter; the boldest passed his arm into this opening, in order to slip back the bolt which fastened the window. Dufour dealt such a terrible blow upon this arm, that the hand was severed from the wrist, and fell heavily within the corridor. The man, wounded in such an unexpected manner, uttered a frightful cry, and fainted at the feet of his companions, who hastened to carry him off. The day after this expedition, the conqueror nailed to the castle gate, between two bats, the hand that remained in his power; then he ordered the sexton of the parish to publish, through the streets of the town, the following proclamation: "He who has lost a hand, may go to reclaim it at the Castle of Monségur. Peter Dufour will restore it to him without exacting any reward."

The claim did not take place, for the rascal whose member had been amputated died soon of tetanus. This tragical adventure shed terror among the worthless characters of the country, and none of them dared again to form the least undertaking against the terrible porter.

Peter Dufour had a brother named James, who merits equally some slight mention. You will per-

mit me, without doubt, to mingle something merry with the sad recital of my misfortunes.

This James Dufour, as well as a certain number of his fellow-countrymen, set out, two years ago, with the light troops of Frederick, King of Prussia, when this prince had formed an alliance with our sovereign. No one is ignorant that the German monarch showed a singular predilection for the French; he neglected no means to draw them into his service. The Prussian army made an attack on Bohemia towards the middle of the year 1742. The King took very energetic measures to make them respect the churches, so as not to make the Catholic population of this country discontented. He punished with an inexorable severity all profanation of holy places; the least excess of this kind was never pardoned by him. This prince was about leaving the town of Culm to direct his steps towards Prague, the second capital of the Austrian Empire, when he was told that one of his soldiers, having gone into a church, had stolen a rich rosary that the Blessed Virgin, the patroness of the place, held suspended from her hand. This theft was not slow in coming to the knowledge of the inhabitants, who showed themselves very indignant; the population threatened to rise in a mass. On his side, Frederick, not less irritated, ordered that the stolen object should be replaced immediately in the chapel, and that the soldier should pay for the crime, of which he had rendered himself guilty,

with his life. The execution was to take place in front of the army in order to serve as an example.

The officer charged with the delivery of this order to the commander of the vanguard, said to the Prince, without any particular intention, that the hussar whom they were going to bring to justice was a Frenchman. "In that case," replied Frederick, "I wish to see him before the execution." At the end of a few moments the guilty one found himself before the King of Prussia, who speaks our language as purely as a professor.

"Miserable creature," said the King, "why did you steal this rosary?"

James Dufour, not in the slightest degree intimidated by the terrible prospect which awaited him, replied:

"Your majesty, I did not steal it, and, if your majesty will deign to listen to me for a few moments, you will easily be convinced of my innocence."

"Let us see; speak."

"I am a Catholic, and I entered the church with the intention of praying to God for the preservation of the precious days of your majesty, and for the glory of your army. I was kneeling at the foot of the statue of the Blessed Virgin and praying very devoutly, when the Mother of God said to me: 'You are an honest soldier to pray with so much fervor for the King, your master, and, in order to reward such zeal, I give you this rosary.' Could I refuse what the Blessed Virgin deigned to present to me?

I then took the rosary from the hands of the good Mother; that is all my crime."

Frederick could not help admiring the freedom and boldness of mind of a man who did not fear to joke even in the face of death. He said to him:

"Listen to me attentively. You have restored the stolen object. I pardon you this time, but if ever again the Blessed Virgin or any other saint wishes to give you something and you accept it, I will have you executed without fail."

James Dufour did not speak, and profiting by an armistice which suspended hostilities, he left the following month the service of the gracious German monarch, and returned to Dauphiné, his native country. He filled at this time some subordinate position in the Tax Bureau at Montélimart. Would you believe that this man, instead of causing to be forgotten, by the most profound silence, the sacrilege of which he had been guilty, amused himself by relating it with the most minute details. He never lost an opportunity of speaking of his adventure, and regarded himself as an important personage for having been the cause of it. That was his expression with the famous Frederick, upon whom, at this time, the eyes of all Europe were fixed. Not a day passed without James Dufour saying to some one: "The King of Prussia has spoken to me."

Peter Dufour received us, as I have said, with extreme politeness, and allowed us to run through the interior of the castle. These large rooms, aban-

doned for so long a time, breathed deep sadness and gloom throughout. The magnificent tapestries, with their mythological subjects, fixed our attention principally. We had examined the most remarkable pieces, when the old clock struck one; our sixteen year old stomachs already cried aloud with hunger.

"Gentlemen," said the porter to us, "I would persuade you to go to Madame de Rabasteins to dine; then, if you will return, I will show you particularly the armory, relating to you at the same time all the history of the famous Baron des Adrets, to whom this castle belonged in the sixteenth century."

My companions thought this invitation very agreeable. Dufour led us back as far as the threshold. I then ventured to ask him where the dangerous precipice was situated, of which my mother had spoken so much.

"I am going to point it out to you," said our guide to me, with a most mysterious air.

After having turned the party eastward of the building we perceived a very smooth lawn, whose steep descent led suddenly to a defile which separated two small hills placed in front of one another.

Fribourg, in Switzerland, presents to the eye of the traveller a similar situation, with this difference, that the space between the two mountains of this town is much more extended than the opening that separates the hills of Monségur. The village is built in the middle of one of these table-rocks, and upon

the other rises the ancient manor of the Brions, of whom Madame de Pracontal was the last heir. This manor, an indescribable assemblage of constructions which were erected in different ages, was built upon a round eminence, after the principle followed by all the feudal lords, who studied to render the access to their dwellings very difficult by making them many sided. The terrace bordering the eastern side leaned over a brake of ferns, whose treacherous descent led inevitably to the precipice; it was necessary to be extremely sure-footed to avoid falling into the gulf. This had caused them to deplore several accidents of this kind. We had the proof of it in the three crosses erected on this spot as a funeral remembrance. Now, however, no fears could exist in this regard, since Madame de Pracontal had a little wall built, high enough to render any more accidents impossible. On approaching this spot we saw a priest with white locks kneeling near a beautiful iron cross, that touched the wall of protection. He recited in a low voice some prayers. Our arrival did not disturb him. Dufour perceived him immediately, and fell on his knees behind the clergyman; we all imitated his example. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the priest, having finished his orisons, rose and saluted us in the most friendly manner. His venerable face breathed the spirit of meekness.

"Sir," said the porter to him, "will you be good enough to relate to these gentlemen the frightful misfortune that happened to our good mistress?"

"Willingly," replied the priest in a kind tone. We grouped ourselves around him to hear better.

"I had received orders for several years, and I filled the position of almoner at the House of the Ladies of the Benedictines of Valence, when, at the express request of Madame de Pracontal, to whom my father was the physician, I was called to the living of Monségur, now having become vacant by the death of the officiating clergyman. At my entreaty my protectress gave her daughter to M. de Quinsonnas, the eldest of one of the most important families in the Dauphiné. She insisted that I should bless the union, although other clergymen of very high rank, the most part of them relations, had claimed this honor. Madame de Pracontal desired that the marriage of her daughter should be the first that I blessed, for I had only officiated in the parish for a few days. The event that I have the honor of relating to you happened about thirty years ago. Our good lady must be fully seventy years of age. May God prolong her days for the happiness of the poor!

"All distinguished persons in the province were invited to the wedding; the castle could scarcely hold the crowd of guests. A legion of young ladies formed the procession of the bride, whose magnificent toilet enhanced still more her rare beauty. Among her wedding gifts was remarked particularly a necklace of pearls, to which was suspended a cross of diamonds, the price of which no one could imagine. This rich ornament, brought from the

East by the ancestors of Madame de Pracontal, had been transmitted from wife to wife for five centuries. I dwell upon these points because I recollect them as though it had happened yesterday. I see still the silk dress of very pale blue that Mdlle. Lucy wore.

"On coming out of the church, all the guests returned to the castle accompanied by the crowd of peasants, among whom the servants made abundant distributions of wines and eatables. As the hour for the banquet was still far off, the bride desired, while waiting, to eat some fruit. She thought, during this light repast, to break an apricot stone with the handle of her knife. The blow, ill-directed, struck the wedding ring, which had been placed only a few moments before on the finger of the left hand. This ring, broken in several pieces, fell to the ground. Mournful omen! each one interpreted it in a different manner.

"The bride wishing to make some diversion to the sad thoughts to which this incident gave birth, drew her companions out of the drawing-room, under pretext of showing them the flowers in her garden; flowers that she had cultivated with her own hands with infinite care. They were all spread about through the parterres and the green walks. One hour after, the bell rang to announce that the banquet was about being served; the wedding guests, dispersed about through the groves, returned in groups, the young ladies as well. One of them was missing; it was the heroine of the feast. They ran

to her room, but could not find her. Madame de Pracontal, frightened, sprang into the garden, running breathless through the winding walks. The echoes alone replied to her voice. Men, women, servants, dispersed themselves about in all directions; their searches were fruitless; the poor mother ran about like one distracted; she uttered a heart-rending cry; a frightful reflection just struck her mind; she thought of this lawn, whose steep descent had caused such deplorable accidents; her daughter might have slid into the abyss. Madame de Pracontal directed her steps quickly towards this wretched spot; she fell fainting on seeing two wooden crosses that they had erected in remembrance of the accidents, of which this place had been the mournful theatre. Each one imagined the fatal truth; an eager crowd descended painfully on all sides to the bottom of the precipice, in hopes of drawing from thence the bride, still living. M. de Quinsonnas, whose despair cannot be described, walked first. They all arrived there; and oh, what surprise! They found in this spot, neither Mdlle. Lucy, nor the least vestige of her clothes; the little stream that ran at the bottom of the confined pass was dry, a very natural circumstance in the middle of summer; the waters then had not carried away this young and agile person. M. de Quinsonnas, accompanied by servants carrying torches, passed the entire night in running through the whole length of the ravine, not forgetting to search the many cavi-

ties; he did not meet with the slightest indication of the missing one. Several relations at the same time commenced to explore, with expert workmen, the wells and the cistern of the castle; their efforts led to no discovery. The next day some peasants related that a band of gypsies had been seen prowling through the canton for several days; the public voice accused these miserable creatures of stealing children when they failed in getting much booty. They might have found their way into the garden, surprised the bride there, and carried her off quickly in order to rob her of the rich wedding presents, and especially the beautiful diamond cross. This thought, cruel as it may appear, caused hope to dawn once more in the hearts of the two weeping families. M. de Quinsonnas, escorted by a score of horsemen, followed the track of the gypsies, who had directed their steps toward Savoy. They reached them at the end of a few days, in some by-ways, for these people shun the public roads. Mdlle. de Pracontal was not with them. The servants who had come from Monségur, rummaged the wallets of these miscreants, hoping to find there some pieces of the clothing of their young mistress. These wallets contained only some filthy rags. This expedition resulted, in short, in a very singular manner. These gypsies had not carried off Mdlle. de Pracontal as they supposed, but they had stolen, while passing through Mâconnais, two little girls of three years of age, and carried them off concealed at the bottom of their baskets.

These miserable wretches imagined that the horsemen who had came after them were the relations of these children. They, therefore, drew them from their hiding-place, and presented them to M. de Quinsonnas, in order to obtain pardon by a voluntary restitution. The two little girls were restored to their mothers at the expiration of a short time.

"They could not, then, accuse the gypsies of the abduction of the bride. In spite of the evidence, the peasants persisted in sustaining the opinion that another band of these vagabonds had executed the bold trick. Madame de Pracontal adopted this opinion, because it left her a gleam of hope. For several years, emissaries, sent by her, travelled all through Languedoc, Spain, Savoy, and Italy. Their searches were fruitless, and it cost her considerable sums of money. The uselessness of these long efforts brought back Madame de Pracontal to the first idea, that her daughter had slipped on the lawn leading from the castle, and that, in falling to the bottom of this defile, the unfortunate one had become the prey of some wild beasts, who had dragged her away to some impenetrable den. That which gave her the greatest desolation of heart yet in the midst of her affliction, was the fact of not being able to recover the mortal remains of her child, to bestow upon them the honors of burial.

"I have always been of the same opinion with regard to the disappearance of Mdlle. de Pracontal," added the priest. "Acting on my advice, her

mother had erected on the spot supposed to be the one where the catastrophe took place, this iron cross, near which we stand at this moment. You see written here: 'Lucy de Pracontal, June 25th, 1715,' the date of her death; nevertheless, the inscription does not contain the word, deceased. The other two crosses, placed a little lower down, existed before this one. They were erected at the fall of an old man and a young one, who were killed by rolling down the precipice. At present this little wall renders such accidents impossible.

"Madame de Pracontal, being inconsolable, did not wish to live any longer in her grand castle, and retired to a very modest country-house close by the parish church. There she cherishes her tears, and weeps incessantly. Now, I fulfil with exactitude all the obligations of the pious foundation instituted by her. I say every day a mass for the repose of the soul of Mdlle. de Pracontal, and recite at the foot of this iron cross the office for the dead, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, the presumed time of her departure from this life. I was accomplishing this last duty when you came to join your prayers with mine.

"Gentlemen, you have listened to my recital with some interest," continued the priest in a grave voice, "but in order that you may find in this lamentable history a salutary lesson, it is necessary that I should add one other feature. It is known, without doubt, that Mdlle. Lucy, entirely preoccupied with her

jewels and dresses that her mother had spread out in the chamber, forgot, on the 25th of June, 1715, to fulfil a duty which every good Christian should, on rising, perform in the most exact manner, under pain of incurring the anger of God. Yes, gentlemen, on the day of her marriage, a day so solemn for her, Mdlle. Lucy forgot to say her morning prayers."

CHAPTER VI.

MEMOIRS OF THE BARON DES ADRETS—THE YOUNG RABASTEINS VISITS THE CASTLE OF MONSÉGUR—FRIGHTFUL CATASTROPHE.

THE last words of the venerable pastor of Monségur caused me to tremble, on hearing them pronounced in so solemn a tone. I recollected that I had not said my morning prayers; for, not having been able to enter my mother's room, I went downstairs hastily to receive these young people without thinking for my own part of performing a duty which I had never before forgotten. The regret which I experienced in having failed in it, rendered me very sad during the short passage which separated the castle from the domain of St. Peter. The enticing manner of the amiable Causans could not distract me from my painful reflections. On arriving at our dwelling, I invited my companions to be seated around the table, that the servants had set out with refreshments; this left me time to go and present my respects to my mother. I ascended the stairs quickly, and found Madame de Rabasteins stretched on a lounge; her

face appeared to be more sallow than usual, and her features more changed. Divining my presence, she said to me in a quick tone of voice, "I was sleeping this morning when the arrival of these young people compelled you to go down; have you said your morning prayers?"

"Yes, mamma," replied I, without hesitation. Thus I told a horrible lie in order to cover a previous fault; thus I plunged myself deeper and deeper in sin without foreseeing the consequences. My mother spoke to me a second time about the fatal precipice. I showed her how Madame de Pracontal had rendered all kinds of accidents impossible by means of a little wall built by her orders. Madame de Rabasteins shook her head in sign of incredulity. I explained to her at last the project that we had formed to finish the day by a complete exploration of the castle, under the guardianship of Grenadier Dufour. I expressed in glowing terms the pleasure that I anticipated from this excursion. My last words caused a blush of joy to pass over this pale face, as the surface of water ripples sometimes under the breath of a zephyr.

I descended to the dining-room, where the guests were awaiting me impatiently. The repast was as gay and as noisy as one could possibly imagine, for the absence of all grave persons allowed a free course to this delirious excitement. Géraud de Crussol, the most petulant of the band, was the first to recall to our recollection the invitation to return, given by

Peter Dufour. Géraud was a young man, a blonde of seventeen years of age, with a charming face and a lively mind. They drowned his voice with applause, and we commenced at once to regain the road to the castle. I had eaten without appetite; a vague uneasiness controlled me forcibly. On leaving the table, I put in my pocket a large piece of bread, as children often do. I ascended again to Madame de Rabasteins, to embrace her before going out; she appeared touched with this attention, and pressed me tenderly in her arms. I could scarcely tear myself away from her bosom; it seemed to me that I was bidding her an eternal adieu. I was going to cross the sill of the door, when my mother called me back, saying: "Pardon me, my dear Maurice, but take your flask; you have left it on the mantel."

I went back immediately, and took away the flask. This forgetfulness gained for me one more last caress, the sweetness of which I knew well how to appreciate. After my long sickness, I experienced frequent nausea and fainting-spells; above all, when I experienced a disagreeable odor very near me, one would then almost believe, on seeing the alteration of my features, that I was going to faint. The physicians ordered for me the moderate use of ammonia; this prescription had a very good effect. A flask of smelling salts became my inseparable companion.

We came out of the domain of St. Peter about two o'clock, on Monday, September the 18th, 1744. The sky, filled with clouds, presented a gloomy aspect;

all believed that the day would not pass without some violent storm breaking out. In a few moments we reached the castle gate. We found there Peter Dufour posted on guard; his military face bore the impress of unbounded kindness; we all surrounded him affectionately, as if he was an old friend, although our acquaintance with him dated only from a few hours. The guardian of the domains of Madame de Pracontal never left off the uniform of the regiment of Beance; this dress elevated him in the opinion of the country people, and rendered him still more terrible in the eyes of the malefactors.

Peter Dufour had promised to relate to us the history of the Baron des Adrets, but, before speaking to us of this terrible warrior, the sergeant absolutely wished to speak a word to us about his escalade of Prague, a very natural desire for an old soldier.

"We set out from the borders of the Rhine," said he, "in April, 1741. In one march we made one hundred and fifty leagues. We fell into the middle of Bohemia like a bomb-shell, and we climbed upon the ramparts of Prague like cats." Such was the commencement of this recital, which was incoherent and lengthy; nevertheless, in listening to it, our young hearts felt themselves transported with enthusiasm; all seven of us were of a military race, and our parents had followed with brilliancy the career of arms.

The episode of the escalade being finished, our excitement calmed down. Peter Dufour returned to

his usual position, and he related the history of the Baron of Adrets, echoing all the fabulous tales that the country people had reported of this terrible captain.

"He was," said he, "a large and very thin man, for he ate nothing; heaven had given him the faculty of living without eating and without sleeping; and still more he knew how to overthrow all the plans of his enemies by a most prodigious activity.

"You are not ignorant, gentlemen, that the Baron of Adrets commanded the Protestants of the Dauphiné. After some frightful troubles, tranquillity was restored; an order from the King commanded the two parties to cease hostilities. Des Adrets refused to obey, and continued to fight in that province; the King promised a magnificent reward to him who should repress the violence of the rebel, and carry off his person. The soldiers of the Baron were killed, dispersed, or feigned to desert his cause. All these men showed themselves very devoted to their chief, since he permitted them to pillage, and allowed them to commit with impunity every excess of which bandits render themselves guilty.

"Mouvans and Montbrun, the two principal lieutenants of Des Adrets, had soon abandoned him. Jealous of meriting the favors of the sovereign, they resolved to give up the Baron. He was now in imminent danger, for he saw from a rising ground some people in pursuit of him, who knew perfectly well his habits and manner of living; he knew, never-

theless, that, by dint of audacity and agility, he could escape from their pursuit. The family of Beaumont, from which the Des Adrets descended, possessed many domains spread about through Dauphiné; he found then at each step a secure asylum. Besides, the peasants dreaded him so much, that no one among them would ever think of indicating the place of his retreat to the people of the King. The one that the Baron liked best, was the Castle of Monségur, where we are now at this moment. The Templars made it formerly one of their principal fortresses in Dauphiné, and no one lived there any longer through fear, for they related about him very frightful things. Des Adrets, who would not have fled from before Satan, had just concealed himself in this castle when Mouvans and Montbrun pressed very near. Once entered into Monségur, he upset all their plans. These two officers penetrated as well as himself into the castle, hoping to carry off their old captain; but he disappeared like a shadow, leaving his enemies to ferret about at their ease from the garret to the cellar.

"They visited Monségur, perhaps, twenty times without being able to seize their prey, and notwithstanding that the Baron had entered there before their eyes a few minutes before them. Only one living being waited on and lived with the Baron in this terrible dwelling; it was a mute, over whom Des Adrets exercised a diabolical power. The most terrible threats were never known to induce him to indicate to any one the retreat of his master. In a

moment of irritation, Mouvans and Montbrun, indignant at not being able to obtain any information from this mute, killed him by stabbing with a dirk.

"You would ask me, how the Baron existed in his hiding-place? I am ignorant of what he lived on: it was most surprising; for often his enemies blockaded the castle for several weeks, without allowing the least provision to enter. Many people felt sure that he lived upon spiders, a supposition very credible, for I have seen a drummer in my regiment who swallowed them by dozens.

"When Des Adrets knew, without doubt, that his adversaries were in the field, he went up into a high tower, and blew his horn in a most terrific manner. On hearing this signal, the soldiers who remained faithful to his fortune ran to arrange themselves under his command. The Baron took the field, and carried terror into the domains of his rivals. If one may believe the public voice, the horn which he used rang out such a wonderful sound, that the villagers heard it for ten leagues around. They have never again found this instrument, which must have been enchanted."

We interrupted the narration of the sergeant to ask him how the famous Des Adrets died.

"I have heard from the pastor," pursued he, "that the Baron was born a Catholic, and had only embraced Protestantism in hatred of the house of Lorraine. Peace being consolidated, he returned to the religion of his fathers, and died at a very great age

in the Castle of La Frette. He had gained such a renown for sorcery, that the priests of his parish refused to administer the sacraments to him, although he made a profession of Catholicism. A Roman priest, however, more courageous than his brothers, gave him the last sacraments, after having exorcised him several times.

"When, through the influence of the Count of Agoult, I had obtained the place of porter at the Castle of Monségur, I resolved to make some excavations in order to discover the hiding-place of the Baron des Adrets; but Madame de Pracontal, informed of my design, was opposed to its execution, and I was obliged to obey.

"It is certain that many Catholics and several priests were massacred in the subterraneous passages during the religious wars; the family of Brion were shut in the entrance to these gloomy retreats, for being unwilling to profane some places that the martyrs had watered with their blood. Madame de Pracontal was always averse to any one making a search even within the apartments, for fear of their finding something that might cast a dishonorable reflection on the memory of her ancestors. It is asserted, that towards the commencement of the last century, a lord of this place, irritated to the last degree against his son, whose dissolute conduct was dishonoring his name, dragged him, after a terrible struggle, into a subterraneous passage, of which he alone knew the termination, and shut him up there.

You can understand that such emotions are difficult for a father to endure; he, on returning to his room, fell down in a frightful apoplectic fit. He expired without having been able to pronounce a single word; his guilty son died of hunger in the depths of his subterraneous prison, for no one was able to discover the entrance; besides, no one deplored his destiny, and they were not very zealous in their search."

Peter Dufour finished his recital with this frightful episode. We remained then in the interior of the castle; the sergeant led us to the summer-house, which served as a dwelling for him. At first we passed through a lower room, where the family lived, which was composed of five persons, of whom two were large girls. This room was remarkable for a large fireplace in the shape of an arcade, and was worthy of bearing the title of the family hearth, for ten men could warm themselves there at their ease. While we were examining this curious fireplace, my eyes fell upon a cat which was squatting in one of the corners of the hearthstone. This animal had a body entirely black and a head entirely white, a singularity which chained my attention. Peter Dufour having perceived my astonishment, said to me:

"This is the oldest occupant of the house; I found him in this lodging; a rather strange peculiarity has caused us to distinguish him from the other cats. The destruction caused by the rats placed me under the necessity of entertaining in my dwelling a half dozen

cats; my children, as well as myself, amused themselves by observing the manners of these useful guardians; each one of them chose a corner to sleep in, a retreat they adopted especially. We were acquainted with all the retreats, and the experiments that we tried in this regard never missed their aim. Well, this black cat that you are looking at this moment has placed all our vigilance at defiance; in vain have we followed him, spied him; no one has ever yet been able to discover his nocturnal dwelling; he is gone sometimes for several days, then he reappears when you have believed him lost; he is absolutely like the Baron of Adrets. Besides, Farouche, that is his name, is very difficult to govern."

Peter Dufour having ceased speaking, I approached the cat, and put out my hand to caress him; but he rose suddenly, slipped between our legs, and disappeared through a passage with a surprising rapidity.

"My wife and daughters," continued Peter Dufour, "are going to visit the castle; they work there sometimes for hours, but only during the day; for, being afraid of ghosts, nothing could induce them to remain there during the night. This will explain to you why I live in this summer-house, which is separated by an interior court from the main portion of the building, so that the sorcerers, with whom the country abounds, could, during the night, demolish the castle without our hearing the least noise. My son, a boy of thirteen years of age, is more cour-

ageous than the women; he ferrets, and climbs everywhere, in hopes of finding some swallows' nests, and commences many times his searches before sunrise. My son unfortunately is at this moment at school at the schoolmaster's house, otherwise he would have directed you much better than I. I am going nevertheless to lead you to the armory, then I will leave you at entire liberty to go through the castle from top to bottom; Madame de Pracontal has ordered me to do so. Only take care not to break your limbs, for the floors are broken in many places."

Saying these words, the sergeant led us to a hexagon room, where we found spread out some old helmets, some wormeaten lances, and some rusty swords; then he retired and went to join his family.

The horizon was overcast; it commenced to rain; the outer walk became impassable. To occupy our leisure moments we dispersed in bands, and one of the boldest was condemned to look for the others. The number of rooms, libraries, stairways, closets, rendered the task more difficult. This innocent amusement caused a diversion to the sadness which was overcoming me.

Paul de Causans offered himself as a holocaust, condemning himself to commence his search at the end of a quarter of an hour. We all sprang noisily about in all directions; for a very long time such a noise had not been heard in the Castle of Monségur. For my part, after having passed through several apartments, I stopped in a room rather large, but

lighted by only one window. The wall was covered with a tapestry of figured leather, separated by large gilt rods. This beautiful hanging fell in tatters. In the middle ages the nobles adopted in preference this style of hanging. One might have believed after this indication, and on seeing the dilapidation of the floor, that this room had never been renovated, and that it had not been inhabited for several centuries; it appeared to occupy one of the extremities of the castle. A door, painted gray, half off the hinges, was in the corner nearest to the window. I pushed it with my foot; it opened for me a passage into a corridor, which led to a little stairway; I went down, governed by that sentiment of curiosity which inspires us with the desire of making fresh discoveries. At the foot of the stairway I found my progress arrested by a door strongly bolted; I opened it with much trouble, and found myself on the larger part of the lawn, which led to the ravine by a gradual declivity. I distinguished at a few steps from me the iron cross erected in honor of Mdlle. de Pracontal. The sad recital of the priest returned to my mind. I advanced, and I even crossed the little walk to make a closer inspection of the mournful monument. I wished to read with my own eyes the inscription which decorated the cross. The date, 25th of June, 1715, fixed principally my attention; then, turning my head, I perceived the pretty face of Crussol standing with a lantern in the old tower. The rogue made signs to invite me to come there; he disap-

peared before I had time to finish my inspection. I was not slow, nevertheless, in regaining the terrace, and I ascended the stairway hastily, without thinking of closing the door. Sad negligence!

I entered the gilt room; the piercing voice of Paul de Causans was heard from afar; the danger drew near. I crouched down in a dark corner formed by the wall and the projection of a large mantel-piece, supported by two caryatides. As my enemy approached I straightened myself, in order to conceal my feet as well as my elbows; consequently, my back leaned heavily against the tapestry. What was my astonishment when I felt that the wall gave way under my efforts! Having turned my head, I perceived a sort of door, which was half open; the four corners of this door were wonderfully concealed by the rods of tapestry, so that it was necessary to have a very experienced eye to discover its existence; it was fastened below by means of a button that I had pressed without intending to do so, when I was gathering myself up. At the sight of this outlet, which seemed to open on a very narrow passage, I conceived the project of taking refuge there in order to escape the active search of Causans. I glided quickly down this way, and I found myself in a very confined passage, where darkness reigned complete, for the door had closed itself again, without causing the least shock.

Five or six seconds had scarcely passed, when Causans bounded in. He commenced by rummaging

in the corner that I had lately occupied. I heard his step, and even the noise of his hands that he passed cunningly over the inner side of the tapestry, in order to discover some hiding-place. Feeling the danger so near me, I plunged involuntarily into this dark and narrow corridor, for I touched the two sides with my arms. Paul de Causans, having exhausted in vain his search, finished by abandoning the hall, and I soon heard only the echo of his harmonious voice. Free from all kind of fear I wished to go out of my retreat, and sought, by groping about, to find the entrance to this kind of case in which I was inclosed, and I no longer knew if it was before or behind me; for, having turned several times in this corridor, I had lost the right direction; besides, the most profound darkness surrounded me everywhere.

Having passed my hand by chance over the wall, one of my fingers was caught in a little oval cavity, the bottom of which seemed to yield to pressure. I exerted a certain energy to the movement, and the latch raised, and a door opened. This was not the one which had given me the entrance to this narrow passage; this new door seemed to be very heavy; it resisted my efforts violently; one would have believed that some one was opposing from behind a most vigorous resistance. I passed my head through this doorway, and I discovered a room, not very large, lighted feebly from above; in the middle of this room was placed a table and a leather arm-chair; further on, a helmet seemed to have rolled on the

floor. These several objects excited my attention; it made me wish to descend to this room; I say descend, because three steps led down to it. I crossed the passage; my foot slipped on touching the second step; wishing to avoid a fall, I let go the door, to the edge of which I had held; it closed with a frightful shock. This inauspicious noise caused me a movement of fear. I threw myself upon this sort of lever; my hand met with neither latch nor handle; the door was covered over with a sheet of metal, which was fitted to its frame in such an exact manner that the cracks could scarcely be seen. I tore my nails in trying to introduce the ends of my fingers into these confined spaces. My head grew hot; fear commenced to gain upon me; it was no longer to be endured. According to my belief it only sufficed to scream loudly in order to bring some one to my assistance. This method was not, however, to my taste; for I feared to draw upon myself the jests of my companions. Crussol and Causans would not fail to compare me to the fox fallen into the trap. I resolved then to take some relaxation, not doubting that I should be able to break my chains without the help of others. I wished, while waiting, to visit the retreat where my curiosity, which was very natural at my age, had led me. This room was lighted by two openings of a foot in length, having the form of a cellar ventilator; these openings touched the top of the wall. A third ventilator, placed on the other side, only gave a feeble light, but it served to estab-

lish a current of air strong enough to carry out the dampness from such a confined place. In returning I perceived there a nauseating odor, which suffocated me. I thought, at this moment, of my flask; I inhaled the salts with delight. This consoling comfort brought back all my resolution.

This room appeared to me very gloomy on entering it; the darkness diminished gradually, and I could distinguish the objects that it contained; above all, those placed on the right side, where the light from the ventilators shone more strongly. I saw then a helmet, and a hunting-horn like those which the knights of the middle ages used on the battle-field; it was hanging on the wall on a large nail. I was looking at this instrument of war, when the recital of Peter Dufour recurred to my mind. Without doubt, the horn placed before me was the one used by the Baron of Adrets; and I found myself shut up in the wonderful hiding-place that served as a refuge for the terrible warrior when his enemies pressed too near. This reassured me fully, for I made the reflection that the Baron went out at will from this retreat, and that I should be able to do the same.

My investigations being finished on this side, I turned my sight in the opposite direction. A very large object, of which I could not determine the form, filled entirely the other corner, at the end of which the light penetrated much less. I approached, and saw clearly one of those large leather arm-chairs, with an

inclined back, used by invalids. Upon this arm-chair was settled comfortably a woman, whose feet rested on a footstool; her bare head was bent, like that of a person who was sleeping. "It is, without doubt," said I, "one of the daughters of Peter Dufour, who is just resting in this place during the heat of the day; on awakening, she will show me the means of getting out from here." This reflection made me blush at myself for the panic with which I had been seized a few moments before. I called this girl softly to awaken her; she did not reply. Impatient, and fearful of being too late, I approached to assist her to rise from the arm-chair. I put out my hand to take her arm. I recoiled terrified. This *sleeping woman was a corpse!* I sprang towards the door, and I renewed my efforts to open it. I passed my hand over the surface, not doubting that I should discover a button, or some mysterious latch which would let me out into the passage. At the end of an hour employed in this fruitless search, I came to the sad conviction that I should never succeed in obtaining an egress from this terrible prison.

Day declined rapidly. I no longer thought of the jests with which my young companions were going to overwhelm me. I commenced to scream with all my strength; my voice, inclosed in such a confined space, had no compass; the repeated efforts only showed too plainly the insufficiency of this means. My fears were commencing to be renewed, when a triumphant idea arose to repress this new

panic. I seized the horn of Des Adrets—this famous instrument, whose sound had been heard for ten leagues. The vaults of the castle are going to be shaken; what terror I shall fill the inmates with! I proudly took the horn, which was so heavy that my arms could scarcely support it, and placed it to my mouth; but the horn did not give out the least sound. The copper being oxidized from contact with the wall, charged with saltpetre in this place, was perforated with a multitude of little holes, which reduced to nothing the value of this instrument, formerly so wonderful. I vainly tried to obviate this inconvenience by doing my best to close a few of these holes; this was lost time. The hours flew by with rapidity; darkness commenced to surround me. I screamed a second time, without any more success. In return, however, my ear distinguished very clearly a tumult of voices, whose confused noises drew near and died away in turn. This tumult seemed produced by a crowd of people employed in some search. I was certainly the true object of it.

At this moment a terrible reflection threw me into an inexpressible trouble. "O, my mother!" I exclaimed; "what will be your condition when you do not see me return with the other young people?" I felt faint. I leaned heavily upon the table, and used my flask. My strength having returned, I threw myself like a madman upon the door. I clung there with my hands, and even with my teeth. I expe-

rienced a sort of delirium. I struck terrible blows with my feet, not doubting that this noise would draw the attention of the inmates of the house. I clung to this idea, which was certainly the most reasonable. I employed several hours in this exercise, despair rendering it still more fatiguing. I was worn out with weariness. The vault of my hiding-place resounded deafly to my cries. How would my mother—this delicate woman, so quick to be alarmed—support my absence? She would die of grief. I rolled on the ground; I uttered howls more than cries.

During this interval the castle clock was heard; it struck ten times. This was exactly the hour in which I was accustomed to say my prayers, not far from my mother's bed, before retiring. I fell on my knees; what earnest prayers I addressed to heaven in place of those I had forgotten to say at the commencement of this fatal day!

After having fulfilled this pious duty I felt a fresh calm renewed in my soul, but a burning thirst tormented me; and how should I appease a want so imperative? A providential circumstance obviated it; it had rained violently for several hours. I drew near the dormer window; the water had flowed in, and ran along the wall where the larger side terminated in a slope. I thought of placing my handkerchief in such a way as to form an obstacle. The experiment succeeded. The water flowed back on encountering this slight dam, in such a manner that,

without much difficulty, I could draw into my mouth this consoling dew.

The wonderful success that I had obtained in a situation so desperate profited me in many respects. In the first place, the tormenting thirst had disappeared; then I was restored to confidence on seeing that God had manifested in my regard his mercy by such evident signs.

The mortal fears that I had conceived on the part of my mother commenced to be dissipated. I said: "Clotilde, endowed with a very remarkable intelligence, will have certainly found some means to deceive her mistress, and ascribe my absence to some natural cause; and to-morrow morning I will leave my prison before my mother has awakened." This reasoning calmed my agitated senses.

The interior satisfaction that I felt was again troubled suddenly by an unexpected circumstance. The sky had cleared, and the moon appeared as brilliant as could be possibly desired. It shed on the floor of my prison a light which seemed to me much more insupportable than complete darkness; for, by the aid of this mournful light, I could then discover the corpse, whose presence I had in some manner forgotten. I experienced a frightful anguish of heart. I imagined that the skeleton was advancing to stifle me in its terrible embrace. I believed for one instant that I should expire with horror.

I directed my steps backward towards the arm-

chair, which touched the table. I seized it, and seated myself in it, taking care to turn the back to the corner in which the corpse lay.

The lassitude, the painful emotions which agitated my soul, threw me into a sort of stupor. The heaviness and languor of body, more than sleep, spread itself through my entire frame. I no longer existed. Forty years have elapsed since that period, and the dreams that assailed me in that desolate night are still present to my imagination. The image of my mother did not abandon me for a single instant; she appeared to me pale, with dishevelled hair. God had restored her sight in order that she might seek for me. Her love for me directed her footsteps; she discovered me at last. O, misfortune! once more reunited, we could never again leave this frightful abyss.

I returned to life; that is to say, I awakened in the midst of the deepest darkness. I was not long in recollecting the mournful situation in which fatality had plunged me. My eyelids opened painfully, and my glance encountered two large eyes, placed in front of me in the opposite corner. I covered my face with my hands, persuaded that it was the corpse that was looking at me. Nevertheless, by dint of reflection, and seeing my way through my prison, I gained the certainty that the terrible corpse was placed behind and not in front of me. I no longer doubted that this vision was the consequence of my dreams. I took away my hands,

and I perceived the same flaming eyes, but fixed. I looked at them a long time without being able to guess what this object could be, for the darkness prevented my discerning the outline. However, the twilight crept through the ventilators, and by means of the light of day, which was thus shed through the room, the shining of these two eyes grew weaker; at last, the light becoming stronger, I could distinguish perfectly. . . . What was it? you would ask, my friends. A cat, the same that I had seen the evening before under the fireplace of Peter Dufour. Would you believe it, the sight of this living being in this house of death restored me to hopefulness. All that the sergeant had related to us touching the unknown retreat of his black cat returned to my mind. I advanced towards the animal to caress him; he did not give me the chance. Rising very briskly, Farouche climbed upon the wall, and escaped through one of the ventilators. The rapid manner in which this was executed proved that this exercise was familiar to him.

This incident drew me from my stupor. This time I did not forget to say my morning prayers. With what earnestness I asked God to protect my mother! What anguish this poor woman must have experienced on not hearing me return home! I shed abundant tears. Having risen, I sprang again towards the inexorable door, and I exhausted myself in vain efforts to shake it. "It is evident," said I, "that this place served as a refuge for the Baron des

Adrets; but this warrior went out frequently, since he evaded for many long years the pursuit of the officers of the King, and he died in his Castle of La Frette twenty years afterwards. I will finish by finding the means which the Baron used to open for himself a passage." A secret voice gave me the assurance of it; I regained, then, my courage.

I kept my back constantly turned to the corpse. Governed, nevertheless, by an irresistible feeling of curiosity, I approached this object, whose aspect alone caused me the most frighful shuddering, and I looked with attention at these inanimate remains. The head leaned upon one of the corners of the arm-chair, and was in the condition of a skeleton; the upper lip, contracted by the shrinking flesh discovered a row of very white and even teeth, which showed the youth of the subject. Some tresses of hair hung from the skull; the hands were mummified and pretty well preserved; not one of the fingers bore a ring, a very surprising thing for a woman. The white satin shoes on the feet were decayed. One peculiarity, which astonished me, was a richly embroidered handkerchief, which held the dress strongly knotted above the ankles. This dress, of light blue silk, was entirely burnt in some way in the part which covered the bust: the putrefaction of the viscera and of the flesh had produced this effect. I remarked the same traces at the knees and at the elbows: the bones of the skeleton came out through these openings. The neck, formed of cartilages, had resisted

the dissolving action of corruption much better: it was dried up without being deformed.

As I advanced in my anatomical observations, curiosity replaced with me the fright that I had experienced before. My eyes ran over the least details; they were fixed at last on an object that I had not perceived, a necklace of pearls, which, white in their primitive state, had assumed a blackish tint by reason of their contact with putrefied flesh. To this necklace hung a cross of diamonds, over which a thick covering of dust dimmed the brilliancy. I tried to remove this obstacle by blowing upon the precious stones, but I could not succeed in doing it; they remained fixed, and threw out no light. The sight of this cross, the sign of our redemption, inspired me with profound respect. I knelt down a second time.

I ought to add that these investigations of the corpse would have been impracticable for me, if the flask had not served me as an auxiliary; without this preservative, that I owed to the maternal forethought, my organs, naturally very delicate, would not have been able to support the noxious odors that I breathed in this place. I should have succumbed under the effects.

Whilst I was contemplating the sad remains of this young woman, the recital of the pastor recurred to my memory. He had spoken of a dress of light blue silk, of a cross of diamonds, of a hand deprived of the nuptial ring in consequence of a fortuitous

accident; without doubt I had before my eyes the body of Mdlle. de Pracontal, for which unfortunate being an inconsolable mother had been seeking through half of Europe, not suspecting that her daughter was lying in a vault a few steps from her. Some villains had certainly strangled young Lucy, after having bound her limbs; however, they had not plundered her rich wedding presents; this strange fact overthrew all my reasoning. But, the crime once committed, the assassins had left here their victim, and abandoned the theatre of their work. They had found, then, an egress to get out of; I would find it too.

Certainly Clotilde and the people who surrounded my mother would feel bound to deceive her; they would tell her that my playful companions had thoughtlessly carried me away on an excursion, which was to last several days. These consoling reflections banished the discouragement which gained upon me a second time. The desire for my preservation became more powerful; I felt a desire to eat. Until then I had not thought of hunger. I took quickly the piece of bread, that, by a providential inspiratlon, I had put in my pocket, on rising from the table, twenty-four hours before. I ate it with delight. I was wise enough, nevertheless, to reserve the half of it. This repast terminated, I felt myself stronger and at the same time more uncomfortable in another respect; thirst tormented me and I could not satisfy it; it was not raining, but the ap-

pearance of the sky, filled with heavy clouds, made me believe that a storm was about bursting over Monségur, like that of the preceding evening; never had a farmer wished more earnestly for rain after a long drought.

At this moment, a confused noise of voices was heard outside; some more active searches than the former ones were directed to my side. I returned to the project of attracting attention by causing a great noise. I commenced to hurl rudely the helmet against the door, in order to shake it and to produce a considerable reverberation. This violent exercise was not slow in fatiguing me beyond all measure. I seated myself on my arm-chair, which was not so large as that of Mdlle. de Pracontal. Here I will give a minute description of my prison, and make an inventory of the objects that it contained.

The room was six feet long and five wide; the height was out of proportion: fifteen feet at least separated the ceiling from the floor. Notwithstanding this height, the two dormer windows were sufficient to light the interior, for the rays of the sun penetrated there without encountering any obstacle; probably there was no building in front of this one in which I was shut up, and the ventilators opened upon a terrace. The large arm-chair had most certainly served as a bed for the Baron des Adrets when necessity compelled him to pass several nights in this retreat. A wainscoting covered the wall on one side; on the other the wall was plastered

in lime; it was there that the hunting-horn hung, of which I could not make any use. A table of hard wood, very elegant in form, occupied the middle of the room; several remarkable objects were arranged symmetrically upon this table; in the centre, a large quarto volume, bound in ebony wood, according to the fashion of the sixteenth century; a magnificent silver clasp enhanced the value of this book; before it was placed an hour-glass, and on the right was a group of those long black pins with which women do up their hair; to the left a dagger in an ivory case, richly mounted. The sight of this murderous weapon suggested to me an idea that I profited by immediately. I rose triumphantly and ran to introduce the blade of the dagger into the crack of the door, which resembled that of a strong box. I succeeded in shaking it feebly. I was convinced that it was fastened below, above and in the middle. Suddenly by some secret mechanism the three staples moved; hope returned at once to my soul, for man is as quick to rejoice as to be alarmed. While I was pressing heavily upon the blade, it broke in the middle. I remained stupefied. I tried to make use of the stump; the iron broke again a second time near the handle.

Great discouragement succeeded this transport of joy. Plunged in sadness, I returned to the table, and opened the book placed before me. It was a French Bible, very old and rather difficult to read. I commenced to study it, thanking heaven for having furnished me with such a noble means of calming

my impatience. The tutor charged with the direction of my education had only allowed me to become acquainted with a small portion of the Old Testament. I devoured with delight a book which spoke to me of the grandeur of God in terms so poetical, and whose pages presented to me a continued interest. I read for three hours without intermission. The table placed before the ventilators received the sun's rays perpendicularly the light naturally decreased as the day declined, so I could not continue my reading as long as I desired; but this exercise of the mind had calmed the heat of my blood.

After having left the Bible, I felt myself tormented by the want of food. I devoured the second half of the piece of bread. A burning thirst set in at the end of this slender meal. At this moment the distant noise of thunder announced a storm; at the commencement of autumn, showers are frequent. The lightning flashed through my prison with a frightful brilliancy. The tempest finished as usual by a heavy shower; the rain beat against the ventilators. I hastened to follow the proceeding that I had made use of before. I gathered upon my handkerchief abundant water, which, although lukewarm, was sweet and refreshing to my parched mouth. This water, running in under the wall, was filled with fine gravel, which was very disagreeable, and yet it seemed to me delicious. What would I have said three days before if any one had offered me such a

beverage? I, for whom nothing was sufficiently elegant or delicate!

Night brought forth again all its terrors; the heavy sleep into which I sank was interrupted twenty times by involuntary shudderings. I awakened immediately at dawn. The light penetrated slowly into the vault; gloom still surrounded me. I saw before me, and without experiencing the least fear, the same two eyes, sparkling with fire. The darkness disappeared gradually, and I was able to distinguish the cat, who kept his eyes fixed upon mine. The presence of this guest caused me a satisfaction which I could not understand. I approached it; it rose as if to prepare for flight; my hand could nevertheless touch his silky coat. The cat climbed quickly up the wall, and went out by the ventilator, as it had done the evening before.

When the cat had disappeared, I commenced my morning prayers, the forgetfulness of which had drawn upon me a chastisement which was now falling on my mother, that angel of piety. When finishing my devotions, some repeated blows broke on my ear; this noise resembled that which masons make when throwing earth upon a wall. They had at last supposed that I had not left the castle. That which surprised me, however, was that the workmen labored far off from my hiding-place. I hurled the helmet once more against the door, in order to attract the people of the castle to this point. This exercise fatigued me very soon. I experienced an

extreme faintness: the growing age is less able to bear the privation of food than any other; my knees gave way under me. I approached the table to lean on it. Would any one believe it, in the midst of this uneasiness a most singular idea struck me! I wished for the possession of the good arm-chair on which the corpse was placed behind me, upon which her limbs were stretched as comfortably as in a bed. I wished to take it away from her in order to rest myself there in my turn, so much is the heart of the unfortunate blind to everything but the feeling of selfishness. This project was abandoned as soon as conceived.

I established myself then upon my arm-chair. The blows continued to be heard; they approached nearer to me. Wishing to calm the impatience which devoured me, I opened the Bible, and I commenced to run through it with avidity. No cloud veiled the disk of the sun, whose rays darted into the room, and shed through it waves of light. The Old Testament had captivated me in such a manner, that I forgot my situation, the place where I was, the objects which surrounded me, I forgot all, I say, except my mother. I was at her side, I read to her the solemn episode of Mount Sinai, and the sublime pastoral of Ruth and Naomi.

While my eyes followed the lines of the book with the most earnest attention, my right hand had seized one of the long black pins which lay near the volume, and I formed mechanically upon the

table some ovals, angles, circles; this amusement resulted in distracting me from my reading. There is some lightness in a head of seventeen years. Having closed the book, I amused myself in drawing upon the wood the initials of my name, copying those which were embroidered in one of the corners of my handkerchief. I succeeded in it; no one could have done better, for the large pin filled wonderfully well the office of a stylus, which the ancients used to write with upon metal plates.

This amusement had occupied me for almost an hour, when my eyes were fixed by chance upon the square of ebony, which formed the outer covering of the quarto volume. I had carefully dried it with the sleeve of my coat without looking at it particularly. *O surprise!* some other hand had traced several lines upon this wood by means of the hair-pins, but the dust, having lodged in the characters, prevented my reading them easily; curiosity hastened my eagerness, and I applied myself to picking out the dust with the end of the iron pin.

My work being finished and the inscription rendered perfectly legible, I read:

"*O unhappy one, whom fatality has plunged living into this abyss, raise your soul to God, ask his pardon for your sins, resign yourself to the sacrifice of your life; you will never leave this tomb.*

"LUCIE DE PRACONTAL.

"28th Juin, 1715."

Nothing could be clearer than the sense of this inscription, and, notwithstanding my mind refused to understand it, at last the veil was torn away. I had just read my own death-warrant. A cold sweat broke out over my whole body, my eyes wandered, and my hair stood on end with fear; my head fell heavily upon the sacred book. I cannot tell how long this fainting-fit lasted. I recovered my senses with difficulty by the aid of my flask. Then, for the first time, the dangers of my position appeared to me in all their gravity. The deep uneasiness that my mother would conceive in my absence had alone occupied my thoughts heretofore, but now—*death*—of which I had not thought, so deep had been my conviction that they would certainly come and deliver me from this odious captivity.

These reflections pressed upon my mind, and the tragical adventure of Mdlle. de Pracontal was displayed before my eyes with all its hideousness. They believed that she had fallen to the bottom of the ravine which ran along the castle. If a sorrowing mother could have imagined that her daughter still existed in this vault, the old dwelling of the Montlaurs would have been demolished stone by stone. I read again the inexorable sentence; she said the 28th of June, and the inscription placed upon the iron cross was the 25th. Mdlle. de Pracontal then had lived more than three days after her entrance into this abyss. She had died resigned; the position of her body showed her to have been

so. As for me, I could now calculate the hours that I had to live, for my last hope had just been taken away; the noise of the workmen had ceased for a long time; a mournful silence had succeeded to the tumult of voices; there was no more bread, I would expire of hunger; I should die full of life, the veins swollen with blood, and surrounded by living people, from whom I was only separated the length of a few feet.

My mind rose with excitement; my old energies seemed to awaken once more. I rose suddenly. I walked like a madman, uttering frightful howls. In the midst of this confusion, I looked around seeking to discover amidst the objects in the vault, or even on the walls, some emblem of the Catholic faith, the consoling sign of our religion. Alas! there was only to be found in this horrible place one cross, and that cross, made of the most precious material in the eyes of man, reposed on the bosom of a corpse!

I resolved then to test another last expedient. I dragged the table near the wall, I placed on top of it the arm-chair, and I raised myself upon this scaffolding in order to reach one of the ventilators; then I commenced screaming as loud as I could, in hopes of my voice being heard. I was not long in perceiving that I was still very far away from the dormer window. I tried to climb up the wall, after the example of Peter Dufour's cat; far from succeeding, this attempt only caused me great pain in my fingers, whose ends were mutilated horribly by being caught

in the cracks of the wall. At this moment, the last rays of the setting sun having entered the ventilator, illuminated my prison entirely with a flood of light, and my eyes rested by chance upon the head of the corpse, whose shrunken lips left the teeth visible; it seemed to me that Lucie laughed at my vain efforts, and this vision, which was only a trick of my excited imagination, finished by overthrowing all the faculties of my mind.

Having descended, I replaced the table and armchair with much trouble in their places; extreme fatigue and repeated yawnings had succeeded to this fit of despair. I suffered horribly from thirst. I sucked, many times, my handkerchief, wet from the evening before; my mouth, which had become truly a fiery furnace, drew from it some refreshment. I imagined that it would rain this evening as it had done on the preceding days. I approached the ventilator to examine the state of the atmosphere; it appeared to me clear; there was no sign in the air to announce the approach of a storm. In short, this time it did not rain. The hours flew by more rapidly than one would imagine during this struggle between hope and despair. Already darkness reigned around me. I threw myself on my knees, and tried to appease the anger of God. This prayer calmed my agitated senses; it seemed to me that the burning thirst had diminished. I experienced an inexpressible sinking; it became necessary to use immediately the flask of vinegar to re-

store me to my senses. The want of sleep was felt imperatively; I strove, nevertheless to fight it off, for fear that if I slept I should never wake again. It overcame my resolution; but what sleep! but what a night! In hell the damned must pass such. Wild, fantastic dreams tortured my imagination, hideous spectres wound their arms around me; my mother, generally so mild, appeared to me terrible and menacing; she showed me the mutilated body of my father; twenty times I opened my eyelids, and wished to chase away these mournful images; twenty times an unmerciful sleep brought them back to me, and showed them in a still more frightful manner.

At last dawn, the last that I was to see according to my human calculations, commenced to shed its uncertain light into my prison. I returned to life; I still saw it; my eyes, weighed down by sleep, distinguished, however, every object. The cat, regular in his habits, occupied the same corner; he slept soundly this time; without doubt my presence in this place no longer surprised him; he closed his eyes; his watchfulness was at fault. I looked at him without moving; then a brilliant and happy idea entered my mind, and immediately I put in execution a project inspired by God himself. Having risen as softly as possible, holding my handkerchief between my teeth, I threw myself upon the cat; the animal, as quick as I was, made one of the most surprising springs, but I succeeded in seizing him in the air; he struggled in my arms, mewing in an in-

comprehensible manner, a supernatural light flashing from his eyes. I experienced a feeling of fear which was nearly fatal to me. I believed for one moment that I had been captured by the demon himself. The claws and teeth of Farouche were buried in my flesh; but despair took away all physical pain, and I succeeded, after many efforts, in tying my handkerchief, and knotting it strongly, around the leg of the furious animal, whom I then threw far from me. The cat, restored to his liberty, sprang with a bound upon the wall, and climbed up with new agility, disappearing through the ventilator, as he had done on the preceding days. As for me, I threw myself on my knees to fulfil a Christian's first duty of the day; but I experienced such weakness in consequence of my long fast, and the terrible struggle sustained against an intractable enemy, that I fainted away while finishing my morning prayers.

CHAPTER VII.

BROUGHT TO LIFE—STRANGE REVELATIONS—FATHER HUET—SERGEANT PETER DUFOUR REWARDED.

I AWAKENED. I was lying on a bed in a dark place. Was I in the kingdom of shadows? Had a miracle restored me to my family? The sharp pains that I felt in my hands caused me to understand that I still held on to life. I saw before me two eyes much sweeter than those of the cat; they seemed to watch for the moment of my awakening. At last I recognized, through the clouds which obscured my sight, the faithful Hubert. He raised my head and made me swallow some spoonfuls of soup. The bitter taste which was in my mouth disappeared very soon. I could not move; I was completely exhausted. The desire to talk governed me, and my tongue, sticking in some manner to the palate, refused to follow the impulse of my will. At short intervals Hubert made me take some drops of broth without uttering a single word. They had probably ordered him to keep

silence. At the end of a certain time, of which I could not determine the length, for my head was not in a condition to collect two ideas, a new personage appeared upon this mournful scene—it was the physician.

Day was about declining; I perceived that the feeble light which was shed in my room took then a different aspect; they had lighted some torches. My energies were restored gradually. I wished to articulate some words; a supernatural power enchained all my senses. Hubert did not leave the head of my bed for a single instant. At last, after some vain efforts, I succeeded in breaking my fetters, and I said to him:

"And my mother, how is she?"

My guardian appeared frightened; he extended his hands towards me to prevent me from continuing. In short this prodigious effort occasioned a sad crisis. I lost consciousness. This fainting-fit lasted during the entire night, and they believed me dead. However, nature, which is very energetic at my age, deceived the prophecies of the people who surrounded me; the wise prescriptions of Dr. Berlioz arrested the progress of the malady, and the fifth day I spoke pretty freely; they replied to me, shunning, however, to provoke the least mental shock.

Hubert and Clotilde surrounded me with the most attentive care. I asked them all at first where my mother was?

"Madame de Pracontal," said Clotilde, "has taken

her to Grenoble, in order to deceive her about your disappearance; they will return in a short time."

The hesitation that these people showed in their replies, the sadness spread over their faces, left little assurance of their word, which commenced to alarm me. When the priest appeared, it was Father Huet; his face bore the impress of a deep melancholy; he said to me:

"Maurice, you have caused us very great grief; you have given your mother such a rude blow, that she may never rise from it. Madame de Pracontal has taken her to the south of the province, in order to procure some diversion for her grief. I have a letter from these ladies, who have arrived at Grenoble very much fatigued; your mother is also very sick."

This announcement made me tremble; I should have fallen to the ground had I been up. The priest retired, after having bestowed upon me some consolation with an eloquence and a charity which touched me extremely.

I felt my strength return, thanks to the regime that Dr. Berlioz made me follow with such rare intelligence. It was the fourth night that I had passed in my bed; my memory was returning to me gradually; my tragical adventure was unrolled before my eyes with all its incidents. I understood that God had used his own kind, strong arm to draw me out of the vault. One thing surprised me, however; they had not placed me in my usual room. I immediately conceived some suspicions—the people of the

house had deceived me. My mother, I was convinced, was lying not far from me, overcome with suffering; they feared for both of us a heartrending interview.

On the fifth day, early in the morning, after having taken some light food, I pretended to wish to sleep, and I asked that they should leave me alone, and shun making a noise. Hubert obeyed, left me, and descended to the office. I rose at the end of a few moments, and with trembling steps I took the way to my mother's room. I found no one there; all the furniture, the smallest objects occupied their usual places; the large counterpane of yellow damask covered the bed. I sat down and my tears flowed freely. I regained my room with wavering footsteps; a violent fit of fever set in from the time that I returned to my bed. The physician having seen me the evening before, was very much surprised at my condition, and taxed poor Hubert with negligence. I passed a very bad night, but a sensible amelioration of my feelings was felt towards the middle of the following day, and convalescence was pronounced under the happiest symptoms. The clergyman came to visit me for the second time, and seeing my recovery so certain, he became more explicit.

"I have received letters from Madame de Pracontal, and I cannot now conceal from you that your mother is dangerously ill."

On hearing these mournful words, I made an effort to rise; I wished to set out immediately, with the in-

tention of going to Grenoble. The priest held me by the shoulders, saying:

"You could not take a hundred steps; your weakness prevents this journey. Your heart should at first become familiar with the heavy blow which is approaching you. Submit yourself, my child, to the will of God; bow your head beneath the hand that chastises you; a good Christian should not murmur against the decrees of Providence."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "she will die, and I will not be able to embrace her once more."

I wished to fling myself against the foot of the bed; they were obliged to hold me, and the people of the house watched over me all night in order to defeat my plans.

I suffered much mental distress; affliction weighed down my heart, yet, in spite of myself and my grief, health returned with surprising rapidity. Having risen on the seventh day, I walked through several rooms of the house. I experienced a sweet satisfaction in seating myself in Madame de Rabasteins' favorite arm-chair. The miraculous manner in which I had been taken out of the vault of Monségur made me conceive hopes of my mother. I formed the unconquerable resolution, since my strength had returned so wonderfully, to set out the next day, without waiting any longer, to go and join her, and lavish upon her such cares as should recall her to life. Such was my design, when the clergyman entered my chamber.

"My dear child," said he, "have you reflected on what I said to you yesterday? Have you looked upon this unhappy separation as inevitable? I come to minister to you some consolation: priests are rarely the messengers of joy. Yes, Maurice, at this moment, that I am speaking to you, your worthy mother must have reached her true country, heaven."

"Oh God!" I cried, "I can then no longer delude myself; it is I who have killed her."

I threw myself on my knees, and a flood of tears poured from my eyes.

The great sacrifice was then consummated; my despair knew no bounds. I regretted having been brought out of my hiding-place. I passed a frightful day, and the night was still more painful. Must I confess it, such a terrible shock did not stop my convalescence in its course; it made surprising progress. The day after the visit of the priest, Hubert brought me, towards nine o'clock in the morning, some black clothes, inviting me to dress immediately. My toilet finished, he threw over my shoulders a black mantle. In the province of the Dauphiné, this mantle shows the loss of a father or a mother; it is the uniform of the orphan. At this moment my limbs trembled; I sank back into my seat. Hubert said to me:

"Since you have not been able to assist at the burial of your mother, it is proper that you should at least assist at the service of the novena."

I understood then his language, and the error into which they had led me, in order to shun the emotions

whose consequences would have been fatal for me. I descended, leaning on the arm of my inseparable guardian. I found, on going out of the house, all the population of Monségur, who followed in my steps to form the cortège. This eagerness moved my heart. It would be impossible for my pen to describe to you the terrible blows that my soul had to endure during the funeral ceremony. I neither saw nor heard anything, and they carried me out of the church fainting.

Without doubt you would like to know what happened during my captivity, and how I came out of my dungeon. I have already told you that Paul de Causans offered to run and seek his companions; he knew how to find them from the depths of their hiding-places, one after another, I alone excepted. Once all reunited, these young people, astonished at not seeing me, ran through all the numerous rooms of the castle, ferreting in the smallest closets without being able to meet with me. As day declined they resolved to return to the domain of St. Peter, persuaded that I had returned there unknown to them, as a joke. Arrived at the house, the band established themselves under the hedge which was in front of the garden, and this stupid Crussol mounted suddenly to Madame de Rabasteins' room, and said to her without reflection:

"Maurice is not here, then, madame? We have been looking for him for two hours without being able to find him; he has disappeared like a shadow."

On hearing these words Madame de Rabasteins uttered a heartrending cry, and seized suddenly the bell-rope which hung at her side. In a few moments her room was filled with people.

"*My son has disappeared*," said the Baroness with emotion.

Crussol, understanding then the imprudence of which he had been guilty, endeavored to mend matters. They pressed him with questions.

This was his reply: "We were separated while seeking each other in the various hiding-places that the numerous rooms of the Castle of Montségur offered to us. For my part, I entered a little turret or tower, and, putting my head out of a round window, I saw below Maurice, who was looking attentively at the iron cross erected to the memory of Mdlle. de Pracontal; he had crossed the little wall which divided the lawn where the declivity led to the ravine. Since then I am ignorant of what has become of him. When we were reunited to look for him, we discovered the stairway by which he had descended. At the foot of this stairway there was a door of which Maurice had slipped the bolt to go out. We found this door open, a proof that Maurice had not returned the same way, for he would not have failed to bolt it again before mounting the stairway."

This recital finished, Madame de Rabasteins gave way to lamentations still more heartrending.

"The fact is clear," said she; "my son, after having examined this mournful cross, must have stepped

over the precipice, and, like Mdlle. de Pracontal, have been carried away into the abyss. Go, my friends," said she, addressing her servants, "I will give a thousand crowns, thirty thousand livres! What am I saying? I will give all that I possess if you will restore to me my son! Hubert, Clotilde, lead me to this fatal place, since God, in his severity, has deprived me of the faculty of being able to guide myself!"

It was necessary, to satisfy her wishes, to lead her to the esplanade of the village. The inhabitants of this place, armed with torches, hastened to the ravine; some guided by affection, others by the hope of gain.

The rain compelled my mother to return. She seated herself near the fireplace so as to hear better the striking of the clock—counting, half hour by half hour, the time as it passed. Hubert was charged to inform her of the progress and the success of these active searches. They did not direct their steps to the side of the castle, since, after Crussol's version, every one believed firmly that I had gone out without ever returning. Hubert came twice to announce to his mistress that the numerous workmen had found nothing, not even the remains of the clothing of her son. Madame de Rabasteins expressed her despair with a violence of which no one believed her capable, as heretofore they had only known her mild and resigned.

The clock had just struck five when Madame de

Pracontal appeared, to shower upon her friend the consolations of a neighbor, under circumstances that recalled all her own sorrows. On hearing the name of the lady of the castle, Madame de Rabasteins started from her lounge, addressing the lady in the most mortifying terms:

"It is you who have carried off my son. The reprobation with which heaven has struck you is extended to me. Cursed be the day in which I have known you."

Speaking in this way, Madame de Rabasteins felt her exasperation increase. It became necessary for Clotilde to seize her in her arms to prevent her from springing upon Madame de Pracontal. She, frightened by the manifestations of an animosity so unjust, hastened to leave the room.

The frail constitution of Madame de Rabasteins could not resist such blows. A congestion of the brain set in one hour after this terrible scene. The supernatural efforts of Dr. Berlioz could not arrest the progress of the malady. Madame de Rabasteins expired on Tuesday evening. The name of her son was the last word that she articulated. She was only interred on Thursday afternoon. Thus, I left my tomb when my mother entered hers. As I scarcely breathed on coming out of the vault, they did not know how long this alarming state would last; many people doubted that I would be able to survive an accident so serious. They were obliged, then, to proceed with the burial of Madame de Rab-

asteins before I had recovered my senses. This will explain why I was placed in another room, since mine was next to that of my mother.

I am going to speak now of the manner in which my deliverance was effected. It is necessary to relate here certain particulars, without which the forsaken condition in which I had been left would scarcely be credible. I have told you that the Marquis of Brion, having had a most lively altercation with his only son, had dragged him down into a subterraneous vault known only to himself, and shut him up there. The unfortunate father did not survive this fit of anger; he died of apoplexy towards 1660. The young man perished miserably at the bottom of his dungeon. In fact, he had rendered himself so odious by his violence and fixed impiety, that the people employed to look for him, even in the bowels of the earth, did not set about their search with much zeal. The immense estates of this branch of Brion fell to the share of the family of Montlaur, whose eldest children found themselves the natural heirs of the Marquis, in virtue of the most sacred rights. Nevertheless, the envious did not fail to utter outcries, which were still resounding when my adventure happened; this explains why the relations of Madame de Pracontal interdicted all kinds of excavations in the surrounding subterraneous passages, and even in the interior of the castle, for fear of discovering some corpse, which would give place to new recriminations. These precautions did not pre-

vent the country people from passing unfavorable judgments, and the mysterious end of the young Lucie de Pracontal was regarded as a sort of retaliation exercised by divine justice.

They went so far as to say that the guilty son, the public voice thus designated the last of the Brions, uttered at certain periods the most heart-rending cries. The popular belief had so accredited this opinion that the daughters of the porter insisted that they heard during the night repeated groans. In short, the lamentations with which I filled the vault of Monségur happened to reach their ears; they did not speak of it for fear that Peter Dufour would turn them into ridicule. Thus, by one of those singular combinations of fatality, the certain means that I had to save myself became, by this fact, an insurmountable obstacle to my deliverance. They never thought of approaching the place from whence these groans proceeded, for the fear of ghosts kept every one away from it. I should have shrieked and made a noise in vain, no one would have come to my aid, and I should have died of hunger like Mdlle. de Pracontal if God had not suggested to me an extraordinary plan, and if he had not given me sufficient strength to execute it. I conceived the design of tying my handkerchief around the leg of the cat. According to my calculation, this handkerchief, bearing the initials of my name, would become a certain indication of my existence, and would engage the people of the castle to make some search

into the interior. I did not doubt that the undertaking would be managed vigorously by a man as resolute as the sergeant of the regiment of Beauce. All my surmises were realized in every point.

At the moment when Farouche jumped out of the ventilator, which opened out upon a little terrace, the young son of the porter was searching the gutters for bird's nests; the cat knocked against him in passing; the child, surprised at seeing the cat dragging a piece of linen after him, commenced chasing him; he, frightened, having run through the first court, took refuge in the lower hall where he passed the days; all the family assembled there in a few moments. The sight of the cat thus dressed excited their surprise; they closed the door, and caught Farouche after a terrible and unparalleled struggle, that the ferocious animal sustained for only a short time. One of the girls hastened to untie the handkerchief, and, guided by that exquisite intelligence which is a chief attribute of her sex, she called upon them all at first to look at the mark, M. R. They thought for a few moments, then these women cried out together: "Maurice de Rabasteins! This young man then still lives, since he tied strongly, and only this morning, his handkerchief to the cat's leg in order to make an appeal to our pity."

The porter applauded, and ordered his son to lead him to the ventilator from whence he had seen the animal come out; the child led him to a little terrace that the father did not know of. The young Dufour,

having stretched himself out full length to see better into the dormer window, cried out: "I see a man lying on the ground."

The porter assured himself of the truth of the fact; he returned to the summer-house, closed the outer door, and ordered the women not to allow any one to enter, nor to noise it about before the work was finished.

Peter Dufour armed himself with several instruments of masonry, and with a long ladder; he judged it most prudent to reach the prisoner by the shortest way rather than to look for him through the interior apartments. I owe my life to the sagacity of this man; without any doubt I should have been found dead in the vault if he had not commenced his search at the other side.

Peter Dufour, animated with zeal, succeeded in enlarging the ventilator in such a manner as to open for him a passage; he let down his ladder, descended into the retreat, raised me up like a feather, and remounted with his burden, without giving himself time to examine anything, calculating that the least detention might compromise my existence. The women of his family took infinite trouble to restore me to my senses; the throbbing of the pulse proved that I still lived, yet my fainting-spell lasted still. Dufour, wishing to discharge himself from so painful a responsibility, caused me to be placed upon a mattress; they transported me to our house on Thursday

morning, where the enlightened care of Dr. Berlioz accomplished the rest.

But to return to my vault. I have told you that the sergeant had only remained there long enough to raise me up in his arms; besides, the darkness prevented him from distinguishing perfectly the surrounding objects; his quick glance, however, perceived the head of the corpse. He did not speak of this fact to his family, but he believed it to be his duty, as porter, to inform his mistress of it. Upon his return, he related to her the manner in which my deliverance was effected, not forgetting to mention the incident of the head of the corpse, and the very white teeth, which denoted the extreme youth of the victim; the porter did not doubt that this head was that of the guilty son. Madame de Pracontal, not contradicting this discovery, shared the opinion of Peter Dufour, and ordered him, under pain of being sent away, to keep the most profound silence of this adventure, and to close up the ventilator again completely.

My deliverance had taken place about a month; my strength and memory had returned. I recollected then, for the first time, the conversation that took place with my mother, on the subject of the lively regret that Madame de Pracontal showed in thinking that her daughter had been deprived of the honors of burial, and yet they did not tell me that she had taken the corpse away from the place where fatality had cast it. I remained convinced that the

porter, preoccupied with the care of getting me out of this prison as soon as possible, had not perceived anything. A sentiment of piety imposed upon me the obligation of pointing out to Madame de Pracontal the place where the forgotten remains of her child were lying. I requested, through the priest, a moment of private interview with her; she replied coldly, "that as this interview could have but one very marked end, it would be disagreeable to her."

I was not ignorant that, in the delirium of her affliction, my poor mother had addressed Madame de Pracontal in an outrageous manner; therefore, this reply did not surprise me. I wrote her a note, couched in these terms: "Madame, the interview that I ask you for becomes indispensable; it does not affect my interests, but yours. I was not alone in the vault of Monségur."

Madame de Pracontal saw immediately that the contents of my note corresponded with the report of the porter; she judged it prudent, therefore, not to irritate me so as to make me wish to divulge the discovery of the guilty son, a discovery which would produce throughout the country a very disagreeable impression. They pointed out to me the hour when I should make my visit. Here a reflection presents itself to me: it is, that misfortune quickly matures the mind. I gained this experience at my own expense. The terrible trial through which heaven had just made me pass, seemed to have taken away the natural levity of my age. I conducted myself in

this case with the coolness and prudence of a man of fifty years of age.

Madame de Pracontal received me politely, and commenced immediately upon the subject of the guilty son, without uttering a single word touching upon my frightful accident, and the recent loss of my mother, saying that she "begged me not to mention, for some time, the discovery of the corpse of this young man." It appeared to me then evident that the lady misunderstood me, and that she was ignorant of the fatal truth. I understood, then, that in order to subdue a character so proud and haughty, it would be necessary to invoke the power of some accomplished facts, instead of waiting for empty phrases.

"Madame, I do not come here," said I to her, "to speak to you of the misfortunes of the Marquis of Brion. I entreat you, in your own interest, to order Peter Dufour to return as quickly as possible to the vault by the same way, and to take from the table, which he will find in the middle of the room, a large book, and bring it to you."

The strength of my words, and the firmness with which I uttered them, caused the lady of the castle to understand that there were some very serious matters at stake. The porter was called and received a formal order to execute neither more nor less than what I had just pointed out, without the help of any one, and without mentioning it to any one. This man having gone out, Madame de Pracontal threw

herself again into her arm-chair, where she remained immovable and given up to reflection. On my part, I shut myself up in an absolute and profound silence.

At the end of about an hour, Peter Dufour reappeared, and delivered the book to the lady, who sent him away by an imperative sign. I took the quarto volume in my hands, I passed my coat-sleeve lightly over the ebony cover, and, after having cast a rapid glance over the mournful inscription, I presented the closed volume to Madame de Pracontal, saying to her: "Read, madame."

I cannot describe to you the sudden effect that the three lines produced upon this haughty woman, who seemed to treat me with a sort of disdain. Her face, lately so impassible, was changed in an instant, and presented to my affrighted mind a certain resemblance to the face of the corpse of Monségur; the teeth, which, by a very rare privilege, Madame de Pracontal had preserved intact, added still more to the illusion. She fell fainting upon her seat. Her people assembled at my call. Having recovered her senses, Madame de Pracontal pressed me in her arms, overwhelming me with thanks, for she understood now the motives of my reserve; my adventure had given her at last the secret of the catastrophe of her daughter.

Peter Dufour was recalled instantly, and received the order to set some workmen to work to make a large opening in the wall which stood on the little terrace. The arm-chair and the burden that it supported were raised up. They placed them in the

room that Lucie occupied the same morning of her marriage, for nothing had been changed in this habitation. Madame de Pracontal recognized her daughter, and covered her dear remains with her tears. She received with devotion the last locks of that magnificent head of hair, which had formerly been the object of her maternal pride. Father Huet was invited to come and remove the corpse. This priest saw himself condemned, at the end of thirty years, to bury the young girl whose union he had blessed. M. de Quinsonnas, who had wedded Mdlle. de Pracontal and who had found himself a widower two hours after the nuptial ceremony, showed himself for a long time inconsolable for this loss; he wore, religiously, deep mourning for two years; yielding at last to the pressing solicitations of his relations, he married into the family of Virien, towards 1720. He found himself, in 1745, the father of a numerous family. Some business matters led him to Nyons, to the house of one of his sisters, just at the time of my catastrophe; the noise of this adventure quickly reached his ears. M. de Quinsonnas, already weighed down with age, ran, nevertheless, in all haste to contemplate the inanimate remains of the one whom heaven had formerly destined for him, and who he had sworn at the foot of the altar to make happy. What various thoughts must have then passed through his sorrowful heart! These two beings, coming together, at the end of so many years,

the one dead and the other full of life, produced a scene as strange as mournful.

I could not exactly satisfy myself as to the motive which had induced Lucie to tie her dress around her ankles with a handkerchief; some ladies made an explanation attributing it to a feeling of modesty. The prisoner feared that the tortures of the last agony would disturb too much her light clothing. Madame de Pracontal wished that the precious cross of diamonds should not leave the remains of her daughter. She decided as well that the body should be buried in the same place where, by the will of God, it had remained lying thirty years. This vault was transformed into a chapel, with the permission of the diocesan authority, and Mdlle. de Pracontal, inclosed in a double coffin, remained resting in her chamber, under the guard of several clergymen. They set immediately to work. Some expert workmen were called to Monségur. I was to serve as guide to penetrate into the retreat, through the interior apartments, since henceforth they were only to go there by this way. It was easy for me to find the first door in the passage, but we had to look a long time before finding the little round cavity upon which my hand had rested by chance and had caused the fatal spring to move. At last, I descended again those three steps which had been so sad for me. The door closed itself with the same noise. I could not help shuddering, and nothing less than the presence of the

five or six persons who accompanied me reassured me.

I cannot express the terrible sensations that I experienced on finding myself a second time in this vault; it seemed to me that I must have sojourned there for entire years, the sad hours held such a heavy place in my memory. I could not help shedding very bitter tears in this place when I thought that this catastrophe had just cost me an irreparable loss, the loss of a cherished mother.

When the architect who was charged with the execution of this work had finished taking the dimensions and giving the necessary instructions to the master mason, we wished to go out of this room by the door which had closed itself; but all these men together could not succeed in opening it. At last, after having lost one hour in vain efforts, we had to resign ourselves to removing the boards which had been placed before the large opening, and we then succeeded in regaining our liberty. The architect hastened to report this peculiarity to Madame de Pracontal, and obtained from that lady the authority to destroy forever this terrible obstacle; in short, having gathered together seven or eight locksmiths, with very strong instruments, he set to work the next day. All these men united and broke open the door. They discovered a formidable apparatus of chains, pulleys, and enormous weights. These chains were fastened below in the foundations of the building, and were held above by large beams

of oak. They could not help admiring this vast and complicated work. The door was then broken open, but they had not yet obtained the solution of the problem; not one workman could discover the means which the Baron des Adrets had used to open the latch inside. Such a proof satisfied my self-love, and I ceased from that time to accuse myself of awkwardness, as I should have done before the expedition of the architect.

They did not wait to finish the work before they proceeded to the consecration of the chapel. Madame de Pracontal desired extremely that the ceremony should be performed by her relation, Monseigneur de Simiane, Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux, but this prelate had just resigned, and Monseigneur Lambert, his successor, hastened to the castle of Monségur, to bless the vault.* The crowd of the faithful eagerly followed his steps. The third day they dug the grave, and the coffin inclosing the body of Mdlle. de Pracontal was placed there. Father Huet naturally presided at the funeral ceremonies. He felt himself tottering several times while fulfilling this painful task.

The accident of which I had failed to be the victim, and the discovery of the corpse of the young bride of 1715, made a great noise, not only in the Dauphiné, but still more in the neighboring provinces.

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* This chapel, as well as all the buildings of the old Castle of Monségur, was destroyed in 1793.

Every day some stranger presented themselves at the castle, who asked to visit the funeral vault. These visits became so numerous, that they were obliged to close the doors and resist all entreaties. The crowd of the indiscreet curious, only increased the melancholy of Madame de Pracontal, who was then entering her seventy-third year; at this age strong emotions are mortal. Some serious complaints troubled her health, which had hitherto resisted such sharp sorrows. This lady languished, and expired at the end of six months. I had made only one request of her, which she had the kindness to grant. I desired that the Bible, the reading of which had given me so much consolation during my captivity, should be given to me. Madame de Pracontal presented it to me, but kept, nevertheless, the ebony cover upon which a hand so very dear had traced those mournful lines.

On looking at Father Huet for the first time, one would almost believe that they saw a captain of dragoons disguised as a priest; but in that large breast beat a heart extremely sensitive, which could not resist such repeated blows. Father Huet fell into a decline. He was to give up the administration of the parish at the end of the year. His family, who cherished him, received him into their bosom and lavished on him the most tender cares; these cares, however, could not cure his melancholy, and he succumbed to it.

As for me, with a broken heart, and a brain full

of mournful thoughts, I saw myself besides condemned to an existence filled with bitterness. These frightful preoccupations did not prevent me, however, from thinking of acquitting the debt of gratitude that I had contracted with my liberators. I wished that Peter Dufour and his family should receive a real testimonial of my gratitude; a pension of four thousand pounds placed them in a position to live independently of every one. That which charmed the sergeant the most with his new fortune was, that he was able to renew each year his uniform of the regiment of Beauce.

I sought for a long time in my mind for some means of rewarding Farouche; I could not find it. This poor animal, very much frightened at the consequence of the two terrible assaults that he had had to sustain, blow upon blow, fled from the dwelling, and wandered for one entire month upon the roofs. At the end of this time, one fine morning, they found him crouching, with his eyes half closed, in his habitual corner under the fire-place. This apparition caused a surprise, mingled with joy, among the Dufour family, who still occupied the summer-house of the Castle of Monségur. The children of the sergeant wished to catch Farouche, and carry him off with them to their father's new dwelling, but this time the cat succeeded in opening a passage; he escaped, and since then Farouche never again appeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAINFUL SITUATION OF THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS—HIS REMORSE—HIS JOURNEY TO BUGEY—THE TWO LITTLE SAVOYARDS.

OTHERS in my place would have hastened, perhaps, to abandon the theatre of their misfortunes, and would have taken a disgust to a country where such sad accidents had taken place. I felt very differently; the Dauphiné had become to me a true country, since this province held the tomb of my mother. I remained then at Monségur, but, weighed down with grief, I felt myself followed without intermission by the most heartbreaking remorse; the murderer could not have felt it more cutting. Madame de Rabasteins had the catastrophe of Philisbourg always present in her mind; the forgetfulness of the morning prayer had caused the death of her husband: nothing could distract her from this thought. I could much more justly attribute the death of a cherished mother to my thoughtlessness. This conviction, which could not be doubted, caused my per-

petual torment; it became a heavy chain that I dragged painfully after me, as the galley slave drags his ball, from which he is only separated when he enters the grave.

The gayety of my age had completely disappeared; a smile never enlivened the features of my face; nature, even, seemed to be tinged with my griefs; the aspect of it was entirely changed in my eyes; for me the trees no longer had any foliage, and the sky no longer any azure. I remained for two years in a sort of stupor which resembled idiocy; the days rolled on without my being able to utter more than three or four words, to ask for things that were indispensable to the wants of life. My existence would most assuredly have been crushed in the midst of this frightful stagnation, if I had not been surrounded with the tender cares of the two servants, Hubert and Clotilde. One could scarcely believe that these people, in the condition of hirelings, could show such complete devotion, a sensibility so exquisite, an unselfishness so entire. One strange fact with regard to these two beings,—of the same age, the same condition in life, and very well assorted to be united in marriage, they detested each other cordially, and quarrelled without ceasing, except when waiting on me; then all contention ceased; the two enemies united then to satisfy the slightest of my desires.

Strong minds have always denied the existence of ghosts; without fearing to cast ridicule and con-

tempt upon people who believe in the reality of these apparitions, I merit in this regard to be overwhelmed with their sarcasm. Madame de Rabasteins has appeared to me often, in her usual form, overcome by her blindness, her eyelids cast down, her hair falling down her cheeks, and without powder, as she wore it in the convent at Lyons. It pleased me to cherish these illusions, and far from being frightened at them, as others have been, I looked for them with eagerness.

The study of history and philosophy entirely filled my sorrowful leisure. All at once I paused in the most interesting reading, and urged by a secret wish I went into the chamber of Madame de Rabasteins; I seated myself not far from her arm-chair, near the fireplace, and opposite to a folding-door, leading to the little room occupied by Clotilde. During the short time that she lived in the domain of St. Peter Madame de Rabesteins had made some very strict rules, agreeing with the rectitude of her mind. Instead of using the bell to call her people, she rose, and passed softly through her room to give her orders. She had told them in the most positive manner not to lead her in these short excursions. We took care, nevertheless, to clear the passage of all furniture, or any other object which might oppose an obstacle to her steps. Once having given her orders, Madame de Rabasteins retraced her steps to her customary resting-place, closing carefully all the doors like a well-bred person, and succeeded in reaching her own

room at last, turning the key softly, in such a peculiar manner that I always expected immediately to see my poor mother. Madame de Rabasteins regained her arm-chair, taking care to incline gently, as though she were in the presence of a numerous company.

I went to seat myself, as I said, near this arm-chair, now deserted; I remained a long time overcome, under the weight of my mournful recollections. I experienced suddenly a frightful anguish of heart, my forehead was covered with cold perspiration; then I heard the key turn in the lock, with that noise so familiar to my ears, the door opened, and my mother entered, slowly she passed, bowing according to her modest custom, and went to rest on the lounge of crimson damask.

I contemplated eagerly this cherished image. I was in an ecstasy. The illusion remained complete so long as I did not move. Urged at last by the most tender desire, I sprang towards her, to cover those dear hands with my caresses; but instead of meeting those knees upon which I had so often been softly cradled, I found only a mute piece of furniture, whose coarse stuff scratched my face. I allowed myself to fall upon the floor, shedding many tears, and uttering the most plaintive cries. At this moment, Clotilde ran and led me back to my room. This good girl watched the slightest movement of her master; knowing me to be in Madame de Rabasteins' room, she listened behind the door, and

only appeared when my lamentations told her that the crisis was commencing.

If such hallucinations followed me during the day, what would not happen in the middle of the night? My mother never left me in my dreams. I had found her again, we were conversing together; she continued to give me lessons upon many subjects, to correct the southern mode of speech, which was very defective, and which she was in despair about; for Madame de Rabasteins had learned, while with the Ursulines of Lyons, to speak French in much greater purity than the ladies of Languedoc. When the sunlight came to cause my awakening, I regretted to be torn away from a life whose perpetual continuance I should have wished for at the price of all the goods of this world.

During these fantastic nights, I saw my mother advance on tip toes towards my bed, lean over my face to listen if I breathed in a regular manner; her hand rested lightly on my breast; her breath touched my eyelids lightly; sometimes she would place me in a more comfortable position. One evening, when I was really not asleep, this phenomenon was reproduced in the midst of the thickest darkness. The head of my mother leaned over mine; her warm breath penetrated into my eyes; I carefully held my breath, for fear that the least noise would destroy this magic spell; one moment came when I could hold it no longer. I caught in my arms this head so near mine, and I pressed it to my heart with an un-

utterable happiness. It was the head of Clotilde! Following the example of her mistress, this faithful servant came to watch over me during sleep, so much was she alarmed since Doctor Berlioz had not concealed from her the danger with which her young master was threatened by following a kind of life so extraordinary.

My position interested the people who served me. I was just about reaching my twentieth birthday without my grief diminishing, when Monseigneur Lambert, Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux, had the extreme kindness to visit me in order to bring me some consolation. I opened my soul to this worthy prelate, declaring to him that I wished to fly from the world, and to consecrate the rest of my days to the monastic life. Monseigneur Lambert did not receive my overtures as I had expected.

"This vocation for retreat has only come to you in consequence of your grief; you wish to leave the world, and you are not yet acquainted with it; and if it happened that you should regret it when it would no longer be possible for you to return to it, what would your existence then be? God does not lend himself to any such imprudent sacrifices, and, before consecrating yourself to him, it is necessary that you should pass through certain trials. I will point them out to you, my child, and you should not fear going astray in following the line that your first pastor will draw out for you. You should know, above all, that you are not yet of an age to make vows. I exact

that you commence by going out of the narrow circle of your habits of life. I will not advise you to rush into the tumult of the world, but I will exact that you leave for some time the house of St. Pierre."

The proposition alone of abandoning the place where the ashes of my dear mother rested made me start, and caused me to experience a sort of nervous fainting. This trial convinced the wise prelate still more of the necessity of bringing some diversion to my gloomy fancies by a sudden change; he urged the fact that he wished to pass several days with me, under the same roof, in order to accustom me, without doubt, to the authority of his word. I confess that such a sacrifice on his part touched me sensibly. The Bishop of St. Paul charmed my mind as well as my heart by his conversation; he did not cease praising the rural beauties of Bugey, his native country, where he had exercised the ministry for so many long years; in short his exhortations made me decide to take a journey into this neighboring country, as well as Dauphiné. Following the advice of Monseigneur Lambert, I was to make this journey on foot, accompanied by Hubert alone, who was to carry my light baggage.

How much it cost me, however, to put in execution a project that formerly would have caused me such transports of joy. It seemed to me that I was leaving the half of myself at Monségur. I set out on my journey in the middle of the spring of 1746, accompanied by my faithful Hubert. Following the

advice of the Bishop, we went on foot, and we stopped when fatigue compelled us. These forced journeys procured for my weariness a very salutary diversion. We had to pass through the whole length of the Dauphiné, in passing by St. Marcellin and Latour-du-pin. During this passage my habitual sadness diminished but feebly. I was able to account for it later, and I attributed it to the melancholy shade that was shed over the rich country of the Dauphiné. On arriving at Bugey, the face of the scene changed as though by enchantment, and my gloomy thoughts appeared to vanish before the magnificent spectacle which offered itself to my sight. It is not possible to see any corner of the earth prettier, more gay, or ravishing than this little Bugey, encircled between the Alps, the Rhone, and the river Ain.

I had furnished myself with a letter from the Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux. This recommendation gained for me the most touching reception on the part of the religious who directed the college of Belley. This establishment occupied a superb building. The principal hall contained a rich library. It was permitted that I should take, in this college, a lodging for myself and valet. I employed in these rural peregrinations every moment that was not consecrated to study. I obtained with difficulty from the faithful Hubert permission to go alone into the country.

I could not picture, with any expression of our

language, the natural beauties which offered themselves at every step in this delicious Bugey. My mood had changed; my thoughts were a shade less mournful—I almost laughed. If, sometimes, some terrible remembrance was about to attack me, it would disappear at the sight of some admirable view of a running meadow-land that I trod with enthusiasm, like a carpet that the fairies had stretched under my feet. I would go and seat myself in the morning on a little hill not very far from Belley; and, from this point, my wondering eyes took in the whole extent of a landscape, the magnificence of which could not be depicted either with the pencil or tongue. That which characterizes this country is the small proportion in which it is outlined; nothing is very extended; at each turn of the road the scene takes a different character. Neither Italy nor Switzerland, so much boasted of, have ever offered to me the charming views of this little Bugey, of which no one ever speaks.

One morning, in the latter part of May, I set out very early from the college, with the intention of pushing my explorations farther than usual. I was advancing in the direction of Virien-le-Grand, without ceasing to utter exclamations of joy at the sight of the wonders that it pleased nature to spread before my eyes. At the end of several hours' walking I felt myself fatigued, and I made choice of a place to repose in—a natural cradle that the trees had formed with their kind branches. I was

stretched full length on the foliage; my head was settled, as at a window, between two willows, which had approached each other and were interlaced. The thick foliage which grew on the declivity covered half my face. The road from France to Annecy passed by the eminence upon which I had established myself, and from one point of view I could take in a great part of the road, which described at this spot one of the most elegant curves. I was contemplating, penetrated with admiration, this mute scene, when, by a providential chance, two actors came to animate it, expressly, as it were, for me, in the most interesting manner.

From the Annecy side advanced rather slowly a little girl in a woollen dress, carrying a good-sized wallet; judging from her appearance she might be eleven or twelve years of age. From the French side came quite rapidly a young boy, a little older, stout and strong, his head covered with a coarse woollen cap. I had scarcely measured with my eyes the distance which still separated these good little people, when I saw them run towards one another, crying and clapping their hands. The following was the conversation:

"Ah, you here, Nicolas!"

"Ah, you here, Marguerite!"

They were two little Savoyards, brother and sister, whom fortune had reunited unexpectedly. They embraced each other with great joy. The sheltered nook which I had chosen prevented me from being

seen by these children; and their confidence was unrolled before me without my losing a word.

"Nicolas, you have come then from France; we did not expect you so soon at home."

"I come from Lyons, where I have been working all winter at Cousin Antoine's. Our mother is well, I will embrace her, thank God, day after to-morrow."

"Say, then, Nicolas, you have not forgotten what our parents have told you, never to miss saying your prayers, and to take off your cap when passing before a church?"

"I have never failed to do so, I assure you; and you, Marguerite, where are you going to? How is this; you have on a new skirt?"

"I am going to Paris."

"To Paris?"

"Yes, Aunt Suzanne has written to the good pastor to tell our mother that she is to send me down there to them, and that they will take care of me for four years."

"Ah! Marguerite, would you like that I should give you some white bread? Ah! it is good white bread. Wait, I am going to bring you some of it."

Upon this, the young boy drew from a bag, all covered with soot, a small loaf, bought by him the same morning for a few pennies; he gave it to his sister, who accepted it with eagerness, and eat it immediately.

"Ah! Nicolas, would you like some bread made by the mother?"

"What, made by the mother!" replied the brother, transported with joy; "give it to me quickly."

Marguerite drew from her wallet a piece of bread as black as the chimney that Nicolas had swept the day before.

"Here," said she, "eat it; it was the mother who made it."

The young boy threw himself down, and devoured it with delight, saying over several times: "It is the mother who has made it." And I saw distinctly great tears roll down his fat cheeks, and fall upon the piece of black bread; these tears were certainly not bitter.

The efforts that I was making to contain my emotion, made the discovery to the two little Savoyards of the presence of a stranger; they both looked at me smiling, as if they had perceived a friend. I took out of my purse all that it contained, four crowns and six livres, and I divided it between them. The two children embraced again and separated, Nicolas going towards the cottage home, and Marguerite away from it. I hope that Divine goodness will permit that they be reunited a little later under the maternal roof.

This touching scene, so full of nature and pathos, far from cheering my heart, only opened all the wounds once more. These children just showed me, in a most ingenious manner, how much the woman who gives us birth should be prized. Man may be betrayed by every one; by a father, a brother, a sis-

ter, a wife, a friend, while the mother alone remains faithful to him.

The Queen Isabeau, of Bavaria, alone, has obtained a frightful celebrity for having offered to her century an example unknown until then, that of a mother working with zeal for the ruin of her son. Thank God, she was not a French woman.

CHAPTER IX.

THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS GOES TO TOULOUSE —CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU AND THE CAPTAIN ST. PREUIL.

THE thought of retiring from the world preoccupied me without ceasing, and the affairs of the world every day wearied me. The necessity of filling certain formalities relative to the succession of my mother, tore me away from the peaceful existence that I was leading in the lovely Bugey. The knight Robert d'Escouloubre, first cousin of Madame de Rabasteins, was declared my guardian, as my nearest relative; he was waiting for me at Monségur. I saw myself then obliged to abandon my vast hills to repair to this guardian. I imagined him a serious character on account of his age and his position. Our first interview prejudiced me against him in the highest degree. M. d'Escouloubre, who had then reached his ninth lustrum, affected the manners of a fashionable young gentleman, with a graceful giddiness. He laughed outright when I expressed to him rather

timidly the intention of embracing the monastic state. "This whim will pass away from you, my dear cousin," he repeated every moment. And the more he placed the realization of this design in doubt, the more I felt myself disposed to effect it.

My guardian showed me very clearly that my presence at Toulouse had become necessary, since my interests were centred there. I could not avoid this severe command.

Before my departure for Languedoc, I wished to go and present my respects to the Bishp of St. Paul, with the double aim of thanking him for his kindness, and proving to him that far from withdrawing from the determination of consecrating myself to God, I had decided more firmly than ever to pursue this project. The prelate appeared a little surprised at this persistency, and he commenced to contend with my intentions in an entirely different manner from that of Monségur. Monseigneur Lambert drew the most attractive picture of the happiness that the father of a family, exempt from reproach, tasted in the midst of his children; he exercised in this painting an eloquence most admirable, without doubt, but which did not move me.

"I command you," said he, in conclusion, "I command you, my child, to return to the city of Toulouse, where the best society will give you an eager reception; this is among the proofs to which I wish you to submit before allowing you to engage in the holy vocation."

I left him penetrated with gratitude.

In a few hours I passed from the hands of wisdom into those of folly. M. d'Escouloubre made me desperate with his airs of levity. He said only three or four words touching upon the irreparable loss which had reduced me to the condition of an orphan, without seeking to know in what place the ashes of my dear mother rested. It may well be imagined that I went frequently to pray at this tomb. A very detestable folly finished by irritating me against this tutor, it was the tone of pity that he used in my regard; laughing without ceasing at the manner in which I dressed, ridiculing strongly my great simplicity.

At last we entered the travelling-carriage; it was necessary to carry me to it, for I could not tear myself away from my mother's room, where such dear illusions still held me. I cannot express the painful sensations that I experienced during the whole journey, at hearing the extraordinary discourse of M. d'Escouloubre, who did not cease to converse of the brilliant success that he obtained in Paris, where he had sojourned for many long years. If an unsophisticated person would have been lost in the society of any one man, they certainly would have been in the society of my relation. Thank God, the excess of ridicule served me as an antidote. The trials to which the Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux had just submitted me, commenced by condemning me to hear the foolishness that my guardian uttered. I

took a hatred to the world of which I saw so sad a sample. This journey contributed powerfully to determine my vocation.

We arrived, towards the middle of August, 1747, at Toulouse, where I was very slightly acquainted. M. d'Escouloubre presented me to several families connected with ours; they gave me a good reception, but no one spoke to me of my mother; all these people, occupied with their own pleasures, seemed ignorant that Madame de Rabasteins had ever existed; and, to overwhelm me with misfortune, the etiquette of society obliged me to conceal the indignation which such a proceeding caused me. My guardian engaged himself to furnish me with a compensation for these troubles, since the flow of his gallant conversations stopped the same day of our arrival at the capital of Languedoc. I lodged in his house, where I scarcely saw him, and he interested himself but little with what became of his pupil.

My mother had often spoken to me of a canon named M. Christol, who, at the commencement of his career, was occupied with the education of M. de Rabasteins. At the end of a few weeks, passed in the midst of elements so little in harmony with my ideas and my tastes, I thought of this clergyman. I went to look for him, and found in him a true friend, whom I never left again.

M. Christol did in his way the honors of Toulouse, that is to say, he showed me in detail the beautiful churches that this city contained, and

chiefly that of St. Sernin, one of the most extraordinary basilicas in the kingdom, by reason of the particular style of its architecture. The examination of the churches and chapels being finished, the canon directed my attention towards the monuments of civil construction with which the city abounded. Each street possessed some object worthy of fixing the attention of the traveller. Nearer and nearer we arrived to the capitol At this time, numerous workmen were occupied with ornamenting this antique palace with a new façade opening on the principal square. One of the keepers presented to my astonished sight the sword which was used to decapitate the Duke of Montmorency, condemned in 1632 for the crime of rebellion; he kept it carefully shut up in a box. A rather serious discussion arose between this keeper and M. Christol, who dared to contest the authenticity of this strange relic.

The canon, still heated with the quarrel, said to me on going out of the capitol:

"M. de Rabasteins, if you like, I can take you this evening to the house of an old man, who knew your grandfather very well; on this account he will receive you very well. It is M. du Teil; he is blind, and has reached at this time his eighty-seventh year. In his family the men generally live to be one hundred years old; those whose career stops at eighty must be at fault themselves; they have conducted themselves ill, and have foolishly abused life. Not a lawyer in Toulouse possesses a mind as clear

and bright as this old man, and it will give him excessive pleasure to be able to rectify himself such a bold assertion. I desire to submit to him the murderous sword that they have just shown us."

The proposition of the canon was accepted with great enthusiasm, as I found an infinite charm in the recitals relating to the history of France, above all when the facts related were connected with a period bordering on ours.

My presentation took place the same evening; M. du Teil received me delightfully, and recalled several circumstances relating to my family. He wore the costume of the old time, which my tutor would have regarded as very ridiculous. We found the master of the house surrounded by five or six guests. M. Christol submitted to him without delay the question of the short sword that we had seen at the Hôtel de Ville a few hours before.

"The weapon that they showed you has not this origin," replied M. du Teil; "the sword which the executioner used in 1632 to decapitate the Duke of Montmorency is no longer in existence. The city officers ordered that it should be broken and destroyed, so that the sword which was steeped in such noble blood should never again be employed to cut off the days of some obscure criminal—this is the truth."

"Your assertion," replied the canon, "is, for me, one of the most respectable authorities. Your age, the positions that you and your relations have always

filled in the city, enable you to know, better than any one, the events which have passed in our province during the last century; thus the principal circumstances of the grand drama which finishes with the punishment of the Duke of Montmorency should be perfectly well known to you."

The words of M. Christol became for the old man a challenge, to which he hastened to reply with a sort of modesty, extreme satisfaction shining on his yellow and emaciated face.

"I was born," said M. du Teil, "on the 3d of June 1660, the same day of the marriage of Louis the Fourteenth, and my father was born in the last month of the reign of Henry IV. One of my great-uncles was made city officer in 1632; the duties of his position forced him to remain, with the other magistrates, at the foot of the scaffold until the end of the execution of the Duke de Montmorency. It took place in the little interior court of the capitol. I have from this great-uncle many more interesting particulars than the official historians deign to consign to their recitals. As you find very few events of this kind in Dom Vaisette,* our celebrated annalist, I will commence by speaking of a personage whose name is given by the learned Benedictine with the least detail accompanying it, and yet it is worth much.

"Among the officers of the troops of Louis XIII,

* Title of honor of certain monastic orders.

was distinguished a captain of the guards, by the name of St. Preuil, a man of an heroic courage and extreme boldness. Having passed all his life fighting principally in Italy, he was but slightly acquainted with the generals who were not stationed in Piedmont or Lombardy. The King of France decided to push hostilities vigorously against the Duke of Savoy, and led the army in person, in the spring of 1630. Savoy was invaded, and two divisions, commanded, one by the Duke de Montmorency, and the other by the Marquis d'Effiat, received orders to rejoin the body of the army, which was engaged at the entrance to Piedmont, under the command of Marshal de La Force. Captain St. Preuil was one of this latter body. The three generals united and gave battle to Prince Thomas of Savoy, in a hard combat near Veillane. St. Preuil, engaged in the struggle more in advance than any other, according to his custom, was not long before he was placed in very great danger; he sustained for some time an attack made by four knights united against him, his sword was broken, he was about to perish, when an officer of very high rank broke the circle formed around St. Preuil, killed two knights, and released the captain, then sprang to the other side to continue the contest. In a few moments some squads of soldiers separated St. Preuil from his liberator, without his being able to discover either the name or the rank of the officer to whom he owed his life. The captain re-

marked, however, a very handsome figure, still young, but who was totally unknown to him.

"The battle having terminated to the advantage of the French, each division took up respectable quarters, and the next day the army disbanded, and St. Preuil had not time to discover the great chief who had released him the evening before from the hands of the enemy. The following month, peace terminated the hostilities, the two bodies of the army of the Duke de Montmorency and the Marquis d'Effiat returned to France, and the four divisions that the Marshal de La Force commanded remained on the top of the mountains, so as to occupy a part of the country. They were recalled two years later on account of the revolt of the Duke de Montmorency. The Marshal de La Force received orders to enter Languedoc immediately through the Dauphiné, while the King and Cardinal de Richelieu went through Lyons. The Marshal de La Force, connected by some relationship to the family of Montmorency, withdrew from this painful mission. The pretext that he made use of, was that the fatigues of battle prevented him from taking the command, which passed into the hands of Marshal de Shomberg, a stranger. He accepted it with eagerness, not doubting that this war would furnish him with an occasion to make his fortune. St. Preuil and his company passed then under his orders.

"Schomberg led the expedition skilfully, and succeeded in chasing away the Duke de Montmorency

from the strongholds which would have served him as places of shelter. On the 1st of September, 1632, was fought the battle of Castelnaudary. St. Preuil led with his company of cavalry two battalions of the King's infantry, when a vigorous charge, directed by the Duke de Montmorency in person, overthrew the triple line of foot soldiers, and fell into the midst of the guard of St. Preuil. The Duke saw the handful of officers who accompanied him killed at his side, while he received a serious wound in the shoulder, the pain of which rendered it still more terrible; he cut through five ranks of this cavalry, but then he found himself surrounded; his horse was killed, and dragged him down in the fall, both rolling into a large ditch. At this moment a number of assailants threw themselves upon this rich prey, for every one knew that this bold champion was the Duke of Montmorency. St. Preuil, the boldest of all, dispersed with his sword this herd of soldiers, and seized in his arms the body of the chief of the enemy, already very much weakened by his wounds. O, grief! through the blood and dust that soiled the face of the noble vanquished one, the captain recognized the valiant warrior who, two years before, had released him at the peril of his life in the fields of Veillane. Judge what must have been the despair of St. Preuil!

"Here is where I wished to come," continued M. du Teil; "now we will speak of the illustrious rebel. The Duke de Montmorency had conciliated

the affections of all the inhabitants of Languedoc by his kind manners, his justice, his benevolence, and, above all, by his affability. At the homes of the great this is the best means of gaining their hearts. It was with fright, then, that they saw the governor of the province engaged in the cause of rebellion, and compromising such a beautiful life for the cause of so stupid and ungrateful a prince as Gaston, Duke of Orleans. They say of the brother of Louis XIII, that he would not be disturbed for one moment at the table while eating, not to save the life of the most devoted of his servants.

"The Duke de Montmorency saw himself constrained to go out of Toulouse when the magistrates protested energetically against all acts of treason in regard to the King. The Governor, deceived in his hopes, repaired to the lower part of Languedoc, where his partisans appeared to be more numerous. Some small towns openly embraced his cause; but the larger cities closed their doors against the troops of Montmorency, manifesting, nevertheless, a very lively attachment to his person. The towns of Montpellier and Béziers signalized themselves by their fidelity. The magistrates of the latter declared that they would not receive within their walls the enemies of the King. The inhabitants assembled on the ramparts, and contemplated with sadness the man whom they cherished the most, working for his downfall in such an inconsiderate manner.

"The Duke, seeing himself repulsed by the mag-

istrates of Béziers, resolved to cross the river Orbe, which flowed below this town, in order to offer combat to Marshal de Schomberg, who held a post, with very few men, not far from Castelnaudary. Just at the moment when about to cross the river, near a mill, the Duke was stopped by one of those pythonesses of the lower class, that our country people call, in derision, 'a witch.' This woman, of a beautiful physiognomy and still young, announced to him, in a tone as if inspired, that if he crossed the Orbe death was awaiting him on the other side. M. de Montmorency, not paying much attention to this prediction, pursued his way smiling. Then this woman seized the bridle of his horse to stop him, and had recourse to tears and supplications to turn him aside from his design. The Governor, rather moved, got rid of her entreaties, and crossed notwithstanding. From the moment when the witch saw the Duke fording the river, she threw herself on her knees on the strand, raising her hands to heaven, and using an expression, of which the French language does not offer another equal to it—*pècaïré*—a word of pity and deep interest. The Duke de Montmorency, who just then cast a glance behind him, was extremely touched by such testimonials of affection from this poor creature. He had scarcely reached the opposite shore when fatality hurried him invincibly to his downfall.

"The prediction was then accomplished. The Duke de Montmorency, conquered and taken before Cas-

telnaudary, was led to Toulouse under a formidable escort commanded by the Count de Charlus. During this journey, the old Governor of Languedoc believed that the severity of his wounds would hasten his death, and that he would thus escape at least the ignominy of perishing by the hands of the executioner. The Parliament, where Châteauneuf, the keeper of the seals, presided, instituted his trial immediately. Louis XIII and Richelieu arrived in the meantime within our walls. From the time that the Duke de Montmorency was no longer to be feared, he became an object of commiseration. The love that they had had for him awakened more ardently than ever; the city was plunged in grief. The King could not take a step without the cry of pardon reaching his ears. The most powerful of the nobles tried in vain to move the monarch. Neither the wife nor the sister of the prisoner could succeed in reaching the sovereign. This extreme rigor had been suggested to Louis XIII by Cardinal Richelieu. In order that he should not appear to influence his master on this occasion, the minister separated from him, and went to lodge in a house in the extreme suburbs of the city. He never went out once during the continuation of the trial.

"However, the friends of the Duke de Montmorency employed every imaginable means to save him, by assuaging the anger of the King, or impeding the procedure by some extraordinory expedient. The old Duke d'Epernon came from his

government of Guienne with the intention of uniting his efforts with those of the other dignitaries of the state, and suggested an expedient which none of the others thought of. All the nobles of the court adopted it with enthusiasm.

"According to the ancient laws of war, the person of the prisoner belonged by right to the soldier who had taken him in the midst of the combat. It was his property; the King even could not dispose of it. He acted, then, by invoking this principle in regard to the Duke de Montmorency, taken prisoner by St. Preuil. The latter almost died of joy when they came to appeal to his generosity. The Duke d'Epernon, whose name still preserved some prestige, took it upon himself to present the request to the King, in the name of the captain, and at the same time in the name of the entire army, who were interested in this question. Louis XIII appeared for one moment stunned by this demand, which rested on the most worthy traditions. The pardon could only open a most beautiful issue. The monarch, uncertain in his resolutions, wished that St. Preuil should submit his claim to his prime minister, who was better informed than himself of the laws and customs of the kingdom.

"You can understand that the captain did not draw back from this mission. I ought to recall to your mind that which I said on this subject in the beginning. They should paint him as a warrior full of audacity, whom nothing could astonish, and who

would take the sword in his hand for a word or a look. This captain, having constantly served on the other side of the mountains, had never found himself in the presence of the Cardinal, and smiled at the fear that the name alone of Richelieu caused the courtiers. 'In short,' said he, 'it is only a priest;' and nothing appeared in his eyes less formidable than a priest.

"St. Preuil, full of determination, wound his way towards the dwelling of the Cardinal. A formal order forbade the entrance to any one, no matter who it might be. Besides, the minister suffered extremely with rheumatism. Nevertheless, as every one united in the wish for favor to the Duke de Montmorency, the strange visitor knew how to penetrate even into the sanctuary of the terrible divinity. He found Richelieu buried in a large easy chair, and enveloped in wraps. The sight of this miserable old man inspired him with compassion. He stationed himself before him, one knee bent, his right hand resting on his hip, and the left resting on the hilt of his sword.

"'Eminence,' said he, 'I am the Captain St. Preuil. It is I who have had the high honor of taking prisoner the Marshal de Montmorency. His person belongs to me; I come to claim it, and I think that they cannot put him to death without my consent.'

"Such were the terms of the request, at the end of which there was one moment of silence; then came

forth from the centre of this large easy-chair, as from the depths of some cavern, a roar like that of a lion:

"'Captain St. Preuil, attend to the management of your company, and take care that they do not put your head under your heels.'

"A flaming glance, which pierced through his heavy eyebrows, added still more to the terrible power of his formidable voice.

"St. Preuil, surprised and terrified, gained the door backwards, descended the steps quickly, ran through the group of officers, who were waiting for him outside, without saying a word, and went in all haste to rejoin his squadron encamped upon the left bank of the Garonne. Since then, he has never appeared again in Toulouse.

"The crime of rebellion was evident; besides, the Duke de Montmorency confessed himself unworthy of the mercy of the King, therefore the issue of the verdict could not be doubted. The old Governor of Languedoc was declared guilty unanimously, in the midst of the sobs of the whole court; the sentence was carried by the Parliament, in a body, through the city, with the keeper of the seals at the head, escorted by a weeping multitude, and repaired to the episcopal palace where Louis XIII lodged. Châteauneuf, the keeper of the seals, who had taken the part of the King in the verdict which had just been pronounced, threw himself on his knees to ask, in the name of all the judges, a commutation of the penalty.

"Louis XIII generally showed great weakness in his private life; but this prince resumed the dignity of the monarch when circumstances exacted it. He replied in a firm voice:

"'The welfare of the state exacts that on this occasion I should act as King, and not as a private individual. I refuse to grant the pardon that they ask.'

"The scaffold was to have been erected on the square of the Salin, in front of the grand entrance to Parliament, but they were obliged to give up making the execution in this place, for such a tumult was manifested among the inhabitants, that the magistrates declared that they could not be responsible for the public tranquillity, and they feared some sanguinary conflict between the people and the troops. It was decided, therefore, that this terrible event should take place in the courtyard of the Hotel de Ville; they erected there a scaffold draped with black cloth.

"In the space of two months, which has elapsed between the capture of the Marshal and his condemnation, the serious wounds that he had received in the combat of Castelnaudary healed in a most wonderful manner. Never was one of heaven's blessings received so badly. This rapid cure made the Duke desperate; they feared on his part some temptation to commit suicide; his guard redoubled their care to watch over his slightest movements; they also urged the precaution of serving his meat

hashed, and his bread cut, so that the prisoner would want neither knife or fork.

"At last, on the 29th of October, 1632, the Duke de Montmorency was led from the prison of the Parliament to the capitol, through a thick crowd; for the peasants of the neighboring villages had assembled, attracted as much by compassion as curiosity; the population of Toulouse must certainly have been increased fivefold. Since morning the bells of all the churches tolled the funeral knell, which spread through the city, filling my great-uncle with a sadness, the gloom of which I think could never have been equalled. At this moment the houses remained perfectly empty, for half of the country people ran frightened to the public squares, and the others, more timid, especially the women, prayed at the foot of the altars for the salvation of the soul of M. de Montmorency. In addition to which, he walked to the place of punishment manifesting the most Christian sentiments. The Duke was always proud of displaying in his habits a pompous magnificence; he wished at the end of his life to atone for all such demonstrations of pride by an act of humility; he therefore covered himself with a penitent's sack, made of very coarse cloth.

"They led the criminal to the capitol in a sort of closed chariot. No noise or tumult surrounded the funeral procession, althongh they were obliged to wait there on account of the crowd of spectators. This people, so petulant by nature, observed a relig-

ious silence. Many times sobs, suppressed for a long time, broke forth. The Duke, seated between two clergymen, showed himself very much touched by these testimonials of love. Suddenly, at the corner of a street which was very much obstructed, the guards were obliged to close their ranks, that some one was trying to break through, and from the midst of this dismayed crowd arose the cry of *pècaïré*, uttered in a trembling voice. At this word the Duke de Montmorency turned his head suddenly to that side, where he perceived through the halberts a woman who stretched out her arms to him. He saw her fall fainting; it was the witch of Béziers, whose counsels he had scorned two months before.

"The gates of the Hôtel de Ville were not long in closing rudely on the procession. The Duke, in order to enter into the courtyard where they had erected the scaffold, was obliged to pass under an arcade in front of which was placed in a niche the statue of Henry IV, his godfather, who formerly used to like to call him his son. M. de Montmorency experienced, at the sight of this statue, a most painful emotion. All the municipal officers, of whom my great-uncle was the youngest, were arranged upon one side of the scaffold. The Duke, having finished listening to the last exhortations of his confessor, mounted the fatal stage. In the presence of such a victim, the executioner felt his resolution give way. M. de Montmorency quickly perceived it, and said to him, 'Strike without fear.'

"These words reassured the man; one single blow

sufficed to cut off this illustrious head. The blood sprang up violently and fell upon the wall. The people believe to this day that they can distinguish the marks left in this place by the blood of the Duke de Montmorency. The body was taken to the church of St. Sernin. The surgeons who were appointed to embalm it, drew out five balls. The mortal remains were taken to Moulins. The Princess des Ursins, widow of the Marshal, received them, and caused a superb mausoleum* to be erected to the memory of her husband in the chapel of the convent to which she had retired.

"The people, who were very superstitious," continued M. du Teil, "did not fail to attribute to the punishment of the Duke de Montmorency the frightful disasters caused, in the following month, by the overflow of the Tarn, the Aude, and the Garonne. Another circumstance again struck their minds. The Marshal de Schomberg, the conqueror of Castelnaudary, died suddenly from a violent fit of gout, fifteen days after the execution of the Duke de Montmorency, to whom he had succeeded in the government of Languedoc."

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* This mausoleum, as precious to history as to art, exists still in the chapel of the royal college of Moulins. They were about to destroy it in 1793; a furious mob wished to demolish it. One of the magistrates, running to the scene of action, had the presence of mind to tell them that Montmorency had been in his time a good republican, and that the tyrant Louis XIII had beheaded him. This observation sufficed to stop the arms of these men, and the monument was saved. It has preserved, nevertheless, the mark of the one stroke of the axe that they gave it.

CHAPTER X.

THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS GOES TO PARIS—SINGULAR MEETING — SOCIETY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS.

NO one was ignorant that I possessed a very fine fortune, in consequence of which I became an object of covetousness to certain fathers of families, who aspired to call me their son-in-law. I understood how they made, in touching upon my projected marriage, such low and such ignoble calculations, and my heart experienced great disgust. Desiring to avoid the incessant persecutions of the fashionable world, I left Languedoc, in the middle of April, 1749, and I only regretted in Toulouse the historical conversations of M. du Pac. It took me an entire week to reach Monségur. Who would believe it? I saw again with a sort of joy the places where the misfortunes were accomplished which would destroy the rest of my life. I ran to the tomb of my mother, and I prayed there for a long time; then I went to visit my dungeon: some very skilful workmen had transformed it into an elegant chapel.

The marble under which the remains of Mdlle. Lucie de Pracontal reposed bore the inscription, "*deceased the 28th of June*, 1715," instead of the 25th. They had transcribed there, by the order of her mother, the lines that the young girl had traced on the ebony cover:

"*O unfortunate one! whom fatality has plunged living into this abyss, raise your soul to God; ask of him pardon for your faults. Resign yourself to the sacrifice of life; you will never leave this tomb!*"

I could not avoid starting on reading again these lines; had I not looked at them during some hours as a sentence of death? Some arched windows opened on the side where the two dormer windows had formerly lighted my prison, and a very light door replaced the terrible barrier against which my strength had been vainly exhausted.

On going out of the chapel, I made an excursion to the house of Peter Dufour, who had become the proprietor of a small house at the extreme end of the town. I found all the family united. The sergeant of the regiment of Beauce received me with martial honors. There reigned in this dwelling the most admirable order; the furniture was simple, but bright with cleanliness. His wife and children pressed around me, most joyful to see me again; their emotion prevented them from expressing themselves; nevertheless, all their glances were turned towards me, and seemed to say: "We owe this happiness to you." If the old dragoon of Chevert had

read Virgil, he would most assuredly have placed above his door:

"*O Melibœe! Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*"

The testimonials of gratitude that these good people showed me with emotion affected me to tears.

The journey from Toulouse had brought some diversion to the deep melancholy which filled every moment of my days. This continual sadness appeared to increase after my return to St. Pierre. Some sinister ideas pursued me without ceasing. It seemed that my conscience reproached me for not having embraced the monastic life, as I had made a solemn vow to do so upon the tomb of my mother. Governed by these thoughts, I went to St. Paul Trois Châteaux, to the Bishop, who received me as a tender father would receive his son after a long absence; he guessed, on seeing me, the state of my heart, and spared nothing to combat my projects of retreat. I was forced to tell him, on my part, that the severe trials at Toulouse had increased still more my detachment from the world. The prelate opposed me by some reasonings that surprised me by their justice. "In short," said he to me, "I have resolved, my child, to make you pass through one trial more terrible than all the others, but I will add that this will be the last; if you persist then in your resolution, I will no longer oppose it. You must visit Paris, the capital of France, where virtue jostles with vice,

where one may very easily be lost, but where you may also attend very well to your salvation."

To Paris! This word cast fear into my soul. M. Lambert reassured me, and succeeded in conquering my resistance; he gave me a letter to one of the priests of that large city. On my part, I asked my tutor for some letters of introduction to M. de Bauche, counsellor to Parliament, whose family was under some obligations to the Escouloubre family. On the occasion of this demand I ran a great danger, my guardian taking it into his head to accompany me; happily for me the attraction of gayeties detained him in Toulouse. It having been announced that the Marshal de Maillebois, the new governor of Languedoc, proposed giving some magnificent entertainments, could the interests of a pupil enter the balance with such serious considerations?

I resolved to undertake, this time, my journey alone, without seeking to join any companions; nothing suited my condition better than such a complete isolation. Some business matters of much interest, some steps to take touching the management of my estate, prevented me from setting out as soon as I desired. I was not, therefore, able to reach Paris until the last days of July, 1749. I had conceived the idea that I should only see in this city marble palaces, streets laid out by rule, and paved with broad, beautiful flags like those in the churches; what was my astonishment on beholding only narrow, crooked streets, of an inexpressible filth? I

arrived by the way of the Bourbonnais, and I had to pass through the most smoky outskirts; that which surprised me still more was the noise produced by the rolling of the carriages, joined to the cries that the strolling venders uttered. These good people screamed themselves hoarse to sell objects of the slightest value.

I gave the postilion permission to lead me wherever he thought best. I intended to pass a few days in a hotel, and then to rent a private lodging. At last I established my settled domicile at the end of St. Louis Street, very near the Royal Square. I knew that quiet society lived in the Marais; this suited me much better, as I came to Paris as a pilgrim, and not to give myself up to pleasure and dissipation. At the end of a week's residence in this place, I learned that they were preparing for a ceremony worthy of attracting my curiosity and interesting my heart; we were drawing near to the 15th of August, a day rendered doubly solemn by the vow of Louis XIII. The King, his family, and the courts of justice were to repair to the church of Nôtre Dame to hear grand mass, which was to be said by the Archbishop of Paris. I believed that it would be best to use the precaution of going to church before nine o'clock: what was my astonishment at finding the entrance to the metropolis obstructed with people—an eager crowd covered the bridges and quays. They did not leave me in ignorance that on such an occasion the Parisians were standing from break of day in

order to secure good places on the line that the royal procession was to pass through; it was then impossible for me to make my way through. However, some obliging persons pointed out to me the streets that the Parliament was to pass through on coming from the palace. I ran to post myself at the foot of the bridge of St. Michael, and, after waiting for a half-hour, I saw slowly advancing all the members of Parliament in red robes, headed by President Maupeon; these magistrates, of whom several were bowed down under the weight of age, came on foot and bareheaded; the Exchequer and the President, M. de Nicolai, followed at a short distance from the Parliament; no soldiers, and not a single halbert was used in the escort of these sovereign courts; only the mace-bearers, who preceded the procession, repeated at intervals, "Make way for the gentlemen of the Parliament." The people uncovered themselves in respect while these venerable personages were passing, and suspended their cries and vociferations.

Convinced that my efforts to reach Nôtre Dame would be useless, I took, in great haste, the road to the church of St. Paul, and I arrived just in time to hear the solemn mass of August the 15th.

I proposed to allow several months to elapse before presenting my letters of introduction, so as to enjoy entire liberty. I looked upon it as quite exciting to live totally unknown in the midst of a vast population; I took delight in this thought. One

morning I was going up the street St. Antoine, through a multitude of busy people; I was saying to myself thus: "In the bosom of the capital of my country, in a city peopled with a million of inhabitants, not a single individual, great or weak, knows me; the cost of civility would be a pure loss."

Scarcely had I pronounced these words than a little chimney-sweep, crying in a loud voice, "From top to bottom," stopped before me, took off his woollen cap, and clapped his hands with pleasure; the liveliest emotion was pictured on his face, smutty with soot.

"Sir, sir," repeated he, throwing up his arms and legs, "I am Nicolas."

It was Nicolas, that I had met in Bugey. I should never have recognized him under this garb; but gratitude had engraven my features in his memory.

We commenced to chat in the midst of the people passing to and fro.

"Have you forgotten," said I to the sweep, "to say your prayers morning and evening, and to take off your cap when passing before the door of a church?"

"I have never failed to do so, sir."

"And Marguerite, where is she?"

"She is at the house of Aunt Suzanne, who has taken us both, and we are working for ourselves."

"Take me immediately to Aunt Suzanne."

Nicolas was already well acquainted with Paris. He took me through the most frightful and infamous

streets. I should have sooner believed myself to be in the midst of a small market-town in Bulgaria than in the capital of the most Christian kingdom. We passed through a street filled entirely with dealers in old rags, which were spread out before the doors. There exhaled from this collection of filthy rags an unparalleled odor; it sickened me.

After numerous turns, we found ourselves near a square, that of the Innocents, and at the bottom of a lane we discovered Aunt Suzanne, as smutty with soot as Nicolas; she was selling coals. I questioned her immediately about her nephew; her testimony was the most favorable; however, Suzanne shook her head, and said to me privately:

"He is a good boy, I can say nothing to the contrary; honest, obedient, never using any bad words, and always filled with the fear of God; but with all that I do not believe that he will ever establish himself; he is a little proud boaster, who never picks up anything; who wishes to put on his best every Sunday, more or less, and he wears shoes even in the middle of summer."

"Ah! well," said I to her, "that will not prevent me from taking him into my service, if you will consent to it."

Suzanne placed no obstacles in the way, and Nicolas was invited to come to my house the next day, with the dirt all cleaned off and dressed in his best. When at the end of a week Suzanne contemplated her nephew dressed in an overcoat of blue cloth, and

wearing a hat, and shoes and stockings, she was breathless with surprise. Nicolas served me very faithfully, and only left me at the door of this monastery.

I had resolved not to present myself to those persons to whom I had brought letters of introduction before having enjoyed a little of the air of Paris, in order to appear less provincial. My misfortunes had increased my natural timidity. Believing myself to be sufficiently reassured to approach a counsellor of Parliament in Paris, I went to take the letter of M. d'Escouloubre to M. de Bauche, who lived in a beautiful hotel in Boncherat Street, in the quarter of the Temple. The counsellor received me with a ceremonious, but very attentive politeness; he told me of the obligations that his family were under to my relations; a very considerable debt resting on some estates situated in Languedoc would have been lost to M. de Bauche without the good offices of M. d'Escouloubre, one of the oldest members of the Parliament of Toulouse, and father of my guardian. The counsellor made me all sorts of offers of attention, and announced to me that his house was open to me like that of a relation, warning me, however, that his society was composed exclusively of very grave persons—magistrates, who were strangers through duty to the pleasures and customs of the elegant world.

"Such a reunion," said M. de Bauche to me,

"will offer little attraction to a young man like yourself."

"That is precisely," replied I to him, "the society that I have always sought for, and I have never frequented any other in Toulouse."

To my great satisfaction, M. de Bauche did not say to me one word of my sad adventures; he appeared to ignore them completely. This diminished the embarrassment that I had experienced on presenting myself before him.

On the Tuesdays of every week, thirty or forty counsellors of Parliament reunited, in the evening, at the house of M. de Bauche. I was invited to meet them. I accepted eagerly I was about to hear again some recitals alike, in interest, to those of M. du Pac. They regarded as the most industrious of this reunion, Messieurs de Tubœuf, de Gourges, de Murard, de Boneuil, de Chauvelin, de Noblet, de Louvancourt, de Salaberry, de la Prade, de Maussion, Goislard, de Montsabert, but the oracle of this society was M. Gilbert des Voisins, president of the upper house. A religious silence reigned throughout when he commenced to speak. All breathed of great gravity and seriousness in this drawing-room. Women appeared there rarely, and you only saw one table of backgammon, and no cards. These manners and customs differed from those of Toulouse, where the old men as well as the young people were carried away by the love of play. Here, the three hours that we spent at the house of M. de

Bauche were passed in general conversation: each one took part in it according to his own inclination. For my own part, these conversations had a powerful interest. One thing astonished me, nevertheless: it was the sort of jealousy that all these counsellors of the Parliament showed in regard to the nobility of the sword. I should never have imagined that they would have dared to vilify with so much bitterness the court, the nobility, and the ministers. Messieurs de Chauvelin and Goislard surpassed all others in their violence. One only, M. de Salaberry, showed sufficient determination to defend those persons placed in power. He replied to the transports or violence of his colleagues by some very witty sallies.

Anxious to show some eagerness, I presented myself at the house of M. de Bauche the first Tuesday of the month of February, 1750. On entering the drawing-room, I experienced a certain fear. I imagined that they were going immediately to question me upon the subject of my adventure at Monségur, but chance served me better than the wisest precautions. The master of the house knowing me to be the pupil of M. d'Escouloubre, imagined that I was his nephew, and he commenced to call me by the name of my tutor. I took care not to undeceive him, and thanks to this slight confusion of names I saw myself sheltered from indiscreet questions.

The whole house seemed to be represented on this evening of the 3d of February. Messieurs de Tubœuf and de Louvancourt, the two oldest members

of the reunion, commenced to speak of the corruption of the century, assuring them that the past century was much better. M. Gilbert took up the conversation, and said:

"I ask your pardon if I do not share your sentiments in this regard. The eighteenth century merits much. I will engage that the following century will not be better than ours. Gentlemen, two years ago the keeper of the seals made out a report for the King, which was very honorable for the period in which we live. In the space of one year, the courts of justice in the united kingdom had only applied the penalty of death three times. No other nation in Europe will be able to furnish in its judiciary annals such an example."

M. de Louvancourt replied: "I render homage like you, Mr. President, to this unquestionable proof; but one century may be very corrupt, and not be bloodthirsty. Pardon the expression."

M. Gilbert replied in these terms: "You speak of the corruption of manners, corruption of the integrity of private individuals. Ah, well! I do not admit that you are wrong in this regard. I might be able on my part to cite numerous examples of virtue. And every one of you, gentlemen, are you not equally in a position to signalize some praiseworthy actions known only to yourselves? From this reunion of facts what may not be deduced from the favorable results of my system?

"The corruption of the great should not make

you prejudge the morality of the rest of the nation. I am going to relate to you, if you will permit me, an action of magnificent disinterestedness which took place in the midst of the regency, a period signalized by the greatest depravity. This occurred just at the time that I entered Parliament. M. Leblanc was Minister of War in 1718. He passes for a man of great ability, and some tradespeople have assured me that, since Louvois, no one had ever directed the administration of war with so much superiority. M. Leblanc sprang from an unknown family, and the vulgar name that he bore from his ancestors added still more to this inconvenience. The minister made great efforts to connect himself to some old family, so that he might possess something besides his position and wealth. A person who was charged with these researches came to announce to him that there existed, in a company of lifeguards of the King, one simple guardsman by the name of Leblanc, whose family enjoyed in Bourgogne a most distinguished illustriousness. His father then filled the office of Mayor of the city of Beaune, and his relations had filled the same office without interruption since the year 1300.

"M. Leblanc, charmed with this discovery, gathered all information immediately about his namesake. The official reports told him that this guardsman was one of the best men in the company, and that he enjoyed the esteem of all his chiefs. The minister called this officer, and received him at his

hotel in the midst of the splendors of his elevated position; there he questioned him upon his family, upon his origin, and sought to establish some connection between this one and his own, not forgetting to make him feel in a roundabout manner the advantages that a lifeguardsman might draw from a relationship with the Minister of War. The officer received these advances very politely, but not as he hoped he would. M. Leblanc begged him to refer it to his father, who was better acquainted, without doubt, with the several alliances of his family. The father replied in the same terms as his son, by declaring that "his race was always perpetuated in a direct line, and that as for relations, he knew only his three children. The powerful Minister of War could not make the simple citizen recognize him; which fact, however, did not prevent him from marrying his daughter to one of the great names of the court, Colbert, whose flatterers raised him by their private authority to a Caledonian prince, descended from the ancient kings of Scotland. The truth is, that the great minister of Louis XIV descended from an honest cloth draper from Rheims, and by means of the immense fortune that Colbert was to leave after him, he married his daughters to three dukes, and the most illustrious of peers.

"Permit me, gentlemen," continued President Gilbert, "to finish my speech by one simple observation. When man is advancing towards the evening of his life, he exalts the past at the expense of the

present. Do you know what it is that inspires him with these eternal complaints? It is the regret that he is no longer young. It often happens with me that I think the fruit from my garden has less taste, less flavor than the fruit from the orchard of my father; it is that years have blunted all my senses. We have from Malherbe, besides his poems, a collection of very curious letters; the latter were written during the life of Louis XIII. The old man denounced the present, and could not find terms sufficiently flowery to paint the happiness that human beings enjoyed during the period of his youth; but, his youth was passed under the reigns of Francis the Second, Charles IX, and of Henry III; a fortunate time, when the most inoffensive man ran the risk of receiving at each turn of the street, an arquebusade through his back."

M. de Boneuil then said: "I coincide entirely with your views, M. President Gilbert. We find ourselves in a quarter of Paris which has preserved a regularity of ancient manners. The Marais, the Place Royale, and the Temple, are most assuredly furnished with good houses. I would engage that you could with difficulty find there one woman who frequents the theatres. Gentlemen, the clergymen complain of the coldness of their parishioners. I think they are wrong. Religion has never been more honored; the temples are filled with the faithful."

I dared, at this moment, to raise my voice in tes-

timony of how much I had been edified with the devotion of the people, who were gathered together in such large numbers in the holy places.

"I went, day before yesterday," said I, "to St. Sulpice, with the double intention of hearing vespers, and visiting the most modern, and one of the largest, churches in Paris. I was surprised to see so many people at the services. They drew my attention to the old priest, who was passing through the nave of the church, leaning on the arm of another priest, as though he was worn out."

"Consequently this old priest has not been able to rob you of anything," said M. de Chauvelin, who had not yet said a word.

"Rob me!" exclaimed I.

"This calls for an explanation, for the gentleman is a stranger," very quickly replied President Gilbert des Voisins, "and we must not allow an inhabitant of Toulouse to return to his home with the idea that the priests of Paris are robbers. Here, I will give you that which gave rise to the jest of M. de Chauvelin.

"They commenced in 1642 building the Church of St. Sulpice, where you heard vespers, sir, last Sunday The work was abandoned thirty years after, for want of funds to continue it; the services were said, nevertheless, in an old chapel which was used for the parish. This chapel had become insufficient for the wants of a quarter of the city, whose population increased each day in a most extraordinary

manner. Father Languet, the old man that you saw, who was so infirm, was made pastor in 1714, and he resolved to undertake the building of his new church, and to spare nothing, in order to complete this immense work, and he has had the happiness of accomplishing his aim, for the dedication took place five years ago.

"Father Languet consecrated to this enterprise all his patrimony, a rich inheritance that was left to him by one of his uncles, and still more the incomes of the Abbey of Bernay, of which he was the commendatory abbot; nevertheless, all these united means proved still very insufficient. The indefatigable priest went to beg from door to door. According to the reports of certain persons, he was in the habit of carrying away with him the silver spoons at the end of the dinner, to which he had been invited, at the same time informing the master of the house of it, as you may well imagine. The truth is, that he did this once at the house of Madame Villarceaux. One act alone of this kind gave rise to the public report that Father Languet was accustomed to do this wherever he dined, which is positively false."

"I am persuaded of that as well as you," replied M. de Chauvelin. "However, Father Languet made himself sometimes very troublesome: our family know it by experience. One day, after dinner, he knocked at our door; my father was absent, and he was received by one of my aunts in the study of the master of the house. The good father cast his eyes

upon a beautiful silver goblet that stood on the ledge of the bookcase; my father had received it from his godmother, and attached to it great value. Father Languet carried it off without any more ceremony, joking about the affair, while the good aunt encouraged him in it, charmed, as she said, to contribute to a pious work. As soon as my father returned to the house, and was informed of the adventure, he ran to the priest, where he found himself compelled to redeem his goblet by filling it with crowns, to the amount of six pounds."

"It appears that you bore him some malice," replied M. Gilbert des Voisins.

"Here is, gentlemen, the best trick that Father Languet ever played of this kind. I will relate it for M. d' Escouloubre, who being a stranger, has never heard of this fact. He had had recourse, to provide for the great expenses of his church, to the King and all the princes; they all gave him more or less. The Duke of Orleans, the son of the Regent, showed himself very generous in this regard. One prince alone had contributed nothing to the erection of St. Sulpice. Avarice prevented him from giving anything, but the difficulty of approaching him at an opportune time appeared to be the true obstacle. This eminent personage was the Prince of Conti, who never went out of his residence of l'Ille Adam. The priest went to find him there, explained to him his wants, furnishing him, at the same time, the proofs of the liberalities of the King and the princes of his family. He

implored him to imitate such a noble example by contributing to the erection of his church by means of some sort of gift. The prince half resisted. Father Languet said to him: 'My lord, the Duke of Penthièvre has given me the main altar; the Duke of Orleans wishes to pay for the three bells; be generous enough to charge yourself with the locks of the doors.'

"'The locks of the doors!' asked the prince; 'and how many doors are there?'

"'A score inside, and as many outside.'

"After a few moments' reflection, the Prince of Conti expressed himself in these terms: 'Since you ask it so earnestly, I will pay the bill for the locks; but that must be all, and on one condition, that I am taxed no more.'

"Father Languet took out of his pocket a writing prepared beforehand, and drawn up as follows: 'I promise to pay the amount of all the locks of the Church of St. Sulpice, of which the pastor has directed the building for so long a time, and this on his application. Dated——.'

"The Prince de Conti signed the writing, having carefully examined it beforehand.

"Ten years after, the note was presented to him, and the large *S*, in the word *serrures** having been erased, and replaced by the letter F, it was then the *ferrures*† and not the *serrures* for which the Prince of

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* Serrures—locks. † Ferrures—iron work.

Conti was to pay; and this light stroke of the pen raised the bill to a considerable sum, several hundred thousand francs. The pastor had taken the precaution, some days before the presentation of this bill, to inform the King privately of this little fraud. Louis XV laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, and appeared to be in the plot when the Prince de Conti spoke to him of it as of a wilful injury; so that the Prince, overwhelmed with the jests of all the members of the royal family, found himself obliged to honor his signature.

"People generally," continued M. Gilbert des Voisins, "only knew Father Languet through some very spicy anecdotes relative to the collections made by him for the interest of his church. This venerable pastor merits many other titles in public esteem. He is worthy, I do not fear to say it, to be placed at the side of Saint Vincent de Paul, for his charity. They could not count the number of unfortunate ones whose misery he relieved, or the many secret alms distributed by him from his house on every side. Then, his hand dispensed them with a pious discernment. Father Languet has several times spent a million a year in charity. When the plague broke out in Marseilles, thirty years ago, the Regent and his ministers, too much occupied with the disasters occasioned by the system of law, made no effort to assist one of the principal cities in the kingdom, that his absence from seemed to render of little interest in their eyes. Father Languet, only a private indi-

vidual, guided by Christian charity, supplied its wants. He sent to Marseilles very considerable sums of money, and few at the time were aware of the fact. I have gathered these details from M. de Belzance himself, the Bishop of Marseilles. Our King having arrived at the age when a prince can appreciate good actions, was amazed on hearing of the conduct of the pastor of Saint Sulpice in regard to the people of Marseilles; he wished to reward him for it by making him bishop. Father Languet has always refused the mitre, in the most modest manner. The King, knowing the good use that this priest made of his money, gave him the Abbey of Bernay, whose income he raised to fifteen thousand pounds."

The departure of M. Gilbert des Voisins interrupted the course of general conversation, of which he was always the centre. Several groups were forming. I went from one to the other. On approaching the one where I found M. de Salaberry, I heard the name of Mdlle. de Pracontal mentioned. Curiosity made me lend an attentive ear. I experienced one of those very violent palpitations of the heart, to which I had been subject for many years. They related my own history, changing it in the most singular manner: they made me the husband of Lucie, and the narrator, a very grave and serious man, by reason of his age and condition in life, added to this sorrowful drama some incidents, *ad libitum*, and of which I had not the slightest idea. I have already said that the name of Escouloubre,

with which the master of the house honored me, created a confusion, by which I profited in this circumstance. I must confess that my sojourn in Paris had brought up to this moment some diversion to my sad thoughts; one word sufficed to plunge me again completely in the dungeon at Monségur. I became solitary and alone in the middle of this drawing-room; everything around me disappeared before my eyes; my position presented itself to me more terrible than it was in reality. "It must be," said I, "that my misfortunes are of a very strange nature, since public renown follows me everywhere. I frequent only one house in Paris, and the noise of my frightful adventure has not been long in reaching there; its echo has just struck my ears without my being able to escape from it."

I remained immovable, my arms crossed upon my breast, and my eyes fixed upon a door, which had remained closed until this moment; suddenly, I heard the key turn in the lock with a grating noise, like that which the hand of my mother produced when she was entering her chamber: this similarity was wonderful. The door half opened; a woman's hand appeared slowly; my heart beat still more violently. My mother, might she still be living? Had they drawn me into this house to restore her to me? My imagination rose gradually. At last the door opened entirely, and I saw an aged and half-blind woman appear, who advanced, feeling her way like Madame de Rabasteins: it was the sister of M.

de Bauche, who only entered the drawing-room towards the end of the evening. They hastened to lead her to an easy chair near the fire-place. I profited by the passing confusion caused by the unexpected presence of this lady to gain the antechamber, then the stairs, and, when I found myself in the open air, and in the street, I imagined that I had come out of a furnace.

CHAPTER XI.

FATHER GUERET, THE PASTOR OF ST. PAUL—PROJECT OF MARRIAGE—THE LAMENTABLE END OF THESE PROJECTS.

THE incident that happened during the evening that I passed at the house of M. de Bauche plunged me once more into the deep melancholy with which I had been possessed ever since the fatal adventure at Monségur. I could have wished that all who surrounded me should participate in my grief, and adopt my habits of gloom. Must I say it? the fresh and jovial face of Nicolas caused me such impatience that I reproached myself with it afterwards. On his part, the good boy could not understand my sadness or my uneasiness; and he could not imagine that any one could be unhappy in the midst of the luxuries of life.

After having wandered about Paris for a whole week without aim or intention, I decided to go and visit the pastor of St. Paul, to whom Father Lambert had given me a letter. I then reproached myself

for having remained for so long a time without having taken it to him. I presented myself at the presbytery; they replied to me that Father Guéret was travelling at that moment through the Dauphiné, but that they expected him to return very soon. This word Dauphiné made me start. I returned towards the end of the following week, when I found that the pastor of St. Paul had just arrived, but he was overwhelmed with business on account of his long absence. He sent me word by one of his assistants that he would receive me the next evening about nine o'clock. I was punctual, and Father Guéret equally so. He opened his arms on seeing me.

"M. de Rabasteins," said he, "I come from Monségur. I have prayed at the tomb of your mother; I have visited the chapel where you saw death so near you; you understand, I know all. I am your friend."

On saying these words, he pressed me to his breast. I begged him to give me some explanation of such strange circumstances.

"The fact is very simple," replied he; "the Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux is my intimate friend; he charged me to conduct a negotiation here relating to his abbey, which his predecessor, Father de Simiane, enjoyed, and which he wished to enjoy in his turn. Some serious difficulties have arisen on this subject. They wish to submit Father Lambert to some very burdensome conditions, to which, however, he did not refuse, and as a correspondence

never explains facts very well, I undertook to go to my friend in the lower part of the Dauphiné, in order to receive from him some more positive instructions. The Bishop spoke to me of your adventure as singular and deplorable, and of your projects of retreat, which I shall oppose as much as possible. If we did not meet sooner, the fault must be attributed to yourself; for I was at my post when you arrived at Paris, and if you had shown more eagerness to see me, I should have charged myself with your commissions to the Dauphiné; but you are pardoned: from this moment you belong to me; you will remain under my direction, for you have had the good disposition to become my parishioner."

We parted very good friends. Father Guéret begged me to regard his house as mine, observing to me at the same time, however, that he should be very much occupied, as the paschal time was approaching. However, he placed at my service every evening, from eight to nine o'clock. I profited by this permission, and the next day, at the appointed hour, I ran to the presbytery. Seriousness, mildness, and gayety were mingled in an admirable manner in the physiognomy of Father Guéret. It inspired confidence and security. On seeing him, the unfortunate always believed that they had less to complain of. I was not long in experiencing it myself. I felt myself, when near him, released from the burden which had overcome me by night as well as by day. The conversation having commenced, I addressed some

questions to the pastor touching the extent of his parish. He told me that the Bastile depended upon it. This word Bastile awakened my attention. I became more importunate, and wished to know if it was he who heard the confessions of the prisoners detained in that place.

"No," replied he; "that care is intrusted to Father Griffet, my friend. But when one of the prisoners finds himself in the last extremity, according to the opinion of the physicians, we then go to him immediately to administer the last sacraments; and, in case of death, we proceed with his burial."

"In one journey that I made through Provence with my mother," said I to the pastor, "they spoke to us of a mysterious person, who was taken from the prisons in the Isle St. Marguerite, to be transferred to the Bastile. Do you know if that unfortunate one finished his days in that prison?"

"The mysterious person in question died in the Bastile," replied Father Guéret. "The priests of this parish buried him forty years ago in the cemetery which is beyond St. Paul. The mortuary register, which I will show you, if you desire it, bears on the occasion the date of the 3d of November, 1703, and the name of *Mathioli*, aged forty-five years. This established a false record, for the man was more than sixty."

"Have you any certainty," continued I, "of his true position?"

"None, whatever," replied the good pastor, in an

angry tone. "Just think that for twenty years a crowd of people have busied themselves in trying to discover the name and rank of this enigmatical being. It is the folly of the hour. Father Griffet, a very conscientious man, labored a long time to try and solve the problem. The governor of the Bastile allowed him every facility in his power of examining the documents. Father Griffet has not been able, up to the present moment, to form any reasonable opinion.

"As for me," continued the pastor, "I can certify to a rather curious fact. M. de St. Exupéri, a dean in the chapter-house in Paris, was particularly well acquainted with the nephew of M. de Chamillard, one of the late ministers of Louis XIV. This young man was employed as private secretary to his uncle, and enjoyed his entire confidence. This is what he said positively to the venerable canon: 'Seeing M. de Chamillard in great suffering, and subject to attacks which might carry him off at any moment, I hastened to question him at once about the prisoner, who was guarded with so much care in the Bastile. The minister resisted. I was about throwing myself on my knees before the dying man, when he replied to me: "It is a state secret, and I should betray my duty and my oaths if I divulged it to you."' M. de Chamillard expired the next day, carrying the secret with him to the tomb."

The conversations of the pastor of St. Paul became for me an absolute necessity. They refreshed my

blood, and made me see life under a less gloomy aspect. God granted me another benefit; this was to inspire me with the love of study. I could then convince myself of this truth, that the occupation of the mind procures a contentment of itself that is invaluable. How is it that people who are worn out with the enjoyments of life do not try this, that they might taste some new and delicious sensations?

Every man feels himself drawn strongly towards some science which his neighbor very often does not take the least interest in. Latin books became the principal object of my studies. I joined it to that of botany, as a means of recreation. The labors to which I had abandoned myself made me appreciate still more the happiness of knowing Father Guéret. He took great pleasure in making me acquainted with several learned professors, whom I should never have been able to approach without his influence. The pastor took me to the house of the Abbot of La Blatterie, the author of the Life of Julian the Apostate, who was professor of eloquence at the Royal College. I became one of his most zealous auditors. On coming out from these lectures, I repaired in great haste to the Jardin des Plantes to hear the eloquent Jussieu. The public lectures had not commenced; I passed my time, therefore, in the libraries. I frequented more particularly that of the King, where I became acquainted, through the influence of Father Guéret, with the Abbot Sallier and M. Boza, the keeper of medals.

However, as the great number of visitors caused me much distraction, I preferred to go and study in the library of St. Victor, or in that of St. Germain des Pres, which was enriched with the manuscripts of Father Montfaucon and of those of the Abbot Renaudot. The libraries at Paris are very numerous; each college—and there are sixty—possesses its own. Persons who wish to study are admitted by means of some slight formalities. I found these large literary establishments filled with readers occupied with examining or copying. This zeal for science caused me as much admiration as astonishment. I imagined, on arriving in the capital of France, that dissipation alone reigned there. How great was my error!

In the year 1750, Easter came on the last Sunday in March. Father Guéret was absorbed with his duties of the ministry during fifteen days. I used much discretion in his regard, and deprived myself of seeing him during this retreat, which appeared to me very long. At last I ventured to pay him a visit on the 20th of April, in the evening, according to my custom, or rather according to our agreement.

"Ah! how glad I am to see you," said he to me, opening his arms to me, according to his custom. "Do you know one thing—you may doubt it perhaps; I will marry you."

This word caused me a truly ridiculous fright.

"Marry me," replied I. "Do you think that?"

"Eh! Why not? Have you committed a sacri-

lege, or are you a reprobate of God? You will marry, I repeat it; you will make an excellent father of a family; you will bring up your children as Christians, and every one will be happy."

This last phrase served generally as a conclusion to the periods of the good pastor.

I tried to present some objections. My mouth was always closed by reasons so well founded, that I saw myself reduced to silence in spite of myself.

"Listen to me," said Father Guéret, "this is the question in point. My head, filled with all that the Bishop of St. Paul had told me in regard to you, I related that deplorable adventure, the same day of my arrival, to Madame de Lesseville, the widow of a counsellor of the Exchequer, and one of my most zealous parishioners. This lady has been most eager to relate all your history to the superior of a house of Benedictines, situated at the other end of Paris, in the Street Ville l'Evèque. This convent counts among the number of its parlor boarders a young person, a Mdlle. de Vigny, the daughter of an old chief of the Exchequer, an orphan like yourself. Her mother died in her bath, six years ago, suffocated or burnt, I do not know how; the negligence of the servants was the true cause of this misfortune. Mdlle. de Vigny, having no relations, remained living in the convent, where she had received her education. They gave her a suite of rooms there.

"Madame the Superior and Madame de Lesseville found a singular similarity between your two

situations, yours and that of Mdlle. de Vigny, and immediately they resolved to unite you. You must know that in making projects women act very rapidly; they never pay any attention to any obstacles or remarks that may be addressed to them. After the overtures made by Madame de Lesseville, the Madame Superior begged me to go and see her. I went at her invitation. She called you my pupil; and I very readily accepted the title of tutor, by reason of the friendship and esteem that I feel for you, and I said, on your part, things that I will not repeat, for fear of wounding your modesty. The Superior declared to me that Mdlle. de Vigny, who, exhausted like yourself by grief, and occupied without ceasing with the loss of her mother, wished also, like yourself, to abandon the world, and take the veil. The Madame Superior naturally contended against such a resolution, which was almost always inspired by despair, and often by simple contrariety. In a few months Mdlle. de Vigny will enter into the enjoyment of a very fine fortune; the term of her minority has nearly expired. Her guardian has two sons, who will be presented, one after the other, to marry her; they have not been accepted.

"The Madame Superior asked me, as a favor, to relate your adventure to Mdlle. de Vigny. I lent myself to her wishes, and the Superior went to bring her boarder. I saw a very agreeable young person, but of a delicate constitution. I then commenced my narration. She was much more interested than

myself, having seen the place where the events took place. I was able then to give it a warmth and accuracy that enhanced the interest of the subject. Mdlle. de Vigny listened to me with so much feeling that she could scarcely avoid shedding tears. In short, my dear Maurice, you will do well to come to my presbytery to-morrow at two o'clock. Madame de Lesseville will be there, and will take you in her carriage to the convent in the Street Ville l'Evèque.

"How!" exclaimed I, "you have disposed of me without my consent, without warning me! It is frightful. I cannot resolve to bring myself to an affair so serious."

"You must, you must!" replied the pastor; "you will submit to us. Greater rebels than you have submitted to us."

I was amazed, stupefied. Father Guéret exercised such an extraordinary ascendency over my whole organization, that I did not know how to resist him.

I passed a painful night. I was assailed by remorse. It seemed to me that I was going to violate my vows by marrying; that I should break the secret vow made by me upon the tomb of my mother. My brain, excited by this sorrowful thought, as well as by the absence of sleep, I formed the resolution of cutting short these projects of marriage by employing some energetic means—to leave Paris suddenly the same morning. I commenced immediately to write a letter to Father Guéret, to warn him of

my determination. Nicolas was to take it to him after my escape, and rejoin me the next day at Melun. I wished to continue for some time in Lyons the solitary life that I had led in Paris.

From sunrise I commenced my preparations for departure, congratulating myself on the part that I was taking; I was almost proud of my firmness. At this moment the door of my apartment opened, and the pastor presented himself to my astonished sight. One glance sufficed to show me why he came. Father Guéret knew the human heart too well not to appreciate the regret that I experienced at not being able to grant his desires, and he did not doubt that reflection would cause him to change his determination.

"You are going, then, to set out, my dear pupil," said the pastor to me, half serious and half smiling; "you wish to escape from me. Listen to me. You wish to retire from the world, and embrace the monastic life: it is a project that will never be realized. At your age, twenty-two years, the emotions are lively and the fancies sudden, but the mind changes easily. Think that you are the last offspring of a very old house: the most ardent desire of your mother was to see you married. You would have been now if heaven had preserved her. Do you not think you would violate her memory by acting so contrary to her wishes? It is necessary in order to assert your union, to meet with a young person who shares in the same degree the religious sentiments

that you have known how to preserve intact in the depths of your heart. A providential chance has revealed to you the existence of one woman who agrees with this description: you are accountable for it to your mother who watches over you in heaven. I insist upon it, with the firm conviction that I am working for your happiness by acting thus. The same intentions are directing Madame, the Superior of the Benedictines, in her steps; besides, I have engaged myself to her, and it would be the conduct of a man badly taught who would wish to conceal himself from her invitation by a flight that would cover him with ridicule. You may as well set out to-morrow."

While listening to the pastor, I admired the power of his reasoning. The latter part of his discourse reduced to nothing all my objections. I countermanded the order for departure, and, growing out of some precaution, Father Guéret took me with with him to hear an instruction that Father Guénée was giving at the Church of St. Eustache.

On coming out of this instruction, which charmed my heart and astonished my mind, I was led to the Presbytery of St. Paul, and as one o'clock struck I found myself esconced in a good carriage in company with Madame de Lesseville, whom I had never had the honor of seeing before.

We had to pass over a vast extent of road before arriving at the Presbytery of St. Paul, in the Street

Ville l'Evêque. The conversation, during the journey, consisted in the exchange of only a few words.

Madame de Lesseville kept her face constantly pressed against the carriage window to see what was passing in the street. Suddenly she threw herself back, saying:

"The horrible beast!"

"What is it?" asked I.

"Have you not seen, sir, that large crow that was perched on the roof of the last house?"

"I did not see it."

"These birds bode misfortune. Stop, sir; touch this: it is a sovereign charm to ward off witchcraft."

The object that was offered me as an infallible preservative against the malign influence of the fates, was a bunch of little steel keys, which hung from the watchchain of Madame de Lesseville. I touched them with docility. I did not believe myself to be superstitious, yet the observation made by Madame de Lesseville displeased me, and threw over my spirits a certain uneasiness which did not cease possessing me and weighing me down.

At last, after many turns, we reached the door of the community. The Superior received us with an eager ceremony. Benevolent kindness pierced through the gravity of her manners; she deigned to address me with some questions full of interest. Madame de Lesseville asked for Mdlle. Pauline de Vigny.

"I am not very well satisfied with her," replied the Superior. "Day before yesterday the boarders, wishing to profit by the fine weather, of which we have been deprived for three months, desired to play in the garden, and commenced running: the April sun is treacherous, and it showered violently on the heads of these young ladies, and several of them cough frightfully. Mdlle. de Vigny, who was not afraid of mingling in these games, is of the number of those who have taken cold; but she desires much to offer her respects to Madame de Lesseville, such an old friend of her mother, and I am going to have her called."

We passed a few moments in waiting. During this interval I experienced some indefinable sensations. I trembled like a criminal whom the judge is about to examine. We soon saw appear a young person, rather tall, but evidently of a frail constitution. My first thought on perceiving her was to look in her features for some resemblance with those of my mother: I could not discover any. Madame de Rabasteins was a blonde, and had eyes of a very light blue; Mdlle. de Vigny was, on the contrary, a brunette, her eyes sparkling with an extraordinary light. The Superior scolded her upon the subject of her cough, which Mdlle. de Vigny sought to disguise the violence of by placing her handkerchief constantly before her mouth. The conversation flowed on at first about nothing; insensibly, the Superior knew with a rare skill how to lead me to

relate in detail my captivity in the dungeon of Monségur, and the consequences which were so fatal to my mother. Since my misfortune, I had not yet passed through a trial so complete, for I shunned as much as possible speaking of this event. I could not control my emotion; my recital was finished in the midst of sobs and tears. On their side, these ladies showed themselves very much moved. Mdlle. Pauline de Vigny showed a true affliction; her tears flowed freely, for my horrible catastrophe recalled to her mind the loss of her mother. The similarity of our misfortunes seemed to establish between the afflicted ones a sort of intimacy. Mdlle. de Vigny said to me, with as much grace as sensibility:

"Sir, our two mothers are in heaven, most assuredly, beside one another."

These touching words terminated the conversation. We took leave of Madame the Superior, and of her interesting boarder.

The projects for departure formed the evening before were abandoned without regret: this visit had changed the direction of my thoughts as by enchantment. The fourth day Father Guéret said to me:

"My dear Maurice, your person does not shine with any of those advantages which a fashionable woman looks for in a young man, but in return you possess qualities which may attract to you the esteem and affection of a pious and well-educated young lady. Mdlle. de Vigny has lived in the deepest retirement

since the death of her mother, that is to say since the age of fourteen years; she has refused obstinately to see the world, and has not the least idea of it. It was necessary for her guardian to use some subterfuge in order to obtain permission to present his two sons to her; a presentation prepared with calculation, and with the only aim of making his ward accept either one or the other as a husband. These young people, vain and self-sufficient, thought to dazzle their cousin by a fastidious elegance. That which would have succeeded very well with many women, completely displeased this one. Mdlle. de Vigny repulsed them unmercifully, and asked the favor that they would never speak to her again of marriage; for she imagined that all men resembled the sons of her guardian. Your appearance has, however, modified her ideas: your misfortunes have at first predisposed her in your favor; your religious sentiments, the reserved tone of your language, the modesty of your manners, have done still more. It is not only that, but the simplicity of your dress, and the absence of that sword with which all the gentlemen are ornamented, which has worked so favorably in your interest. Mdlle. de Vigny will be charmed that you should renew your visit to Madame the Superior. Madame de Lesseville would like very much to take you again to the Street Ville l'Evêque."

The words of the good pastor caused me interiorly the sweetest joy; the horizon of my life seemed to

brighten. The conclusion of the first discourse of the pastor returned without ceasing to my mind. My marriage was the principal object of my mother's desire. I would accomplish her wishes by yielding to the entreaties of Father Guéret. Madame de Lesseville was very punctual, and had the good-nature to take me to the Convent of the Benedictines. This time, the bird of ill-omen did not present itself to our sight. Madame the Superior received us with the same kindness; her face bore, nevertheless, the impress of sadness.

"I am not at all satisfied," said she, "with Mdlle. de Vigny. She has not been willing to take care of her cold as all young persons generally do, and her condition has become most serious, to such a point that the doctor has recommended her not to expose herself to the outer air; however, she will receive us in the little parlor that adjoins her room."

The Superior led us to this parlor. We found there Mdlle. de Vigny, who received us as old acquaintances. I remarked with pain a very decided alteration in her features; her eyes were red, and the cheek-bones inflamed.

"You see me still all unnerved," said Mdlle. de Vigny to us, "by a rather exciting scene that has just passed between my guardian and myself. I have addressed him with grave reproaches on the subject of the hasty sale of the furniture of our house. When my mother, a widow for ten years, died in such a deplorable manner, I had just entered my

fourteenth year. Under pretext of my minority, they assured me that the laws prescribed it thus. They sold all that the dwelling of my family contained, not only the furniture, but the linen and even the wardrobe of my mother, that I should have been so happy to have preserved. Of all that which had belonged to her personally, I was only able to save, thanks to the devotion of one servant, a little crucifix of silver. My mother had brought it from Rome; it was blessed by our Holy Father the Pope with his own hands. This crucifix was a most perfect piece of work. M. Couston, the famous sculptor of the King, came to examine it from curiosity. He declared that he had never seen anything better finished. My parents had it mounted on an ebony cross. M. Couston thought that some personage, of an eminent dignity in the Church, had worn it upon the breast, suspended by a silken cord passed through the hands.

"I have placed this crucifix upon my *prié Dieu*, as you see it, ladies. I am going to let you have a closer inspection of it, that you may judge of the delicacy of the work."

On saying these words, Mdlle. de Vigny rose suddenly to take the precious object, but, at the moment when she approached the *prié Dieu*, the little crucifix, shaken without doubt by the concussion of the walk of the young lady, wavered, and finished by falling upon the floor without having been touched.

The two pieces of ebony which formed the cross, becoming detached, flew over the room.

"Ah! my poor crucifix," cried Mdlle. de Vigny, "what a misfortune!"

On saying these words she commenced to weep.

"My child," said the Superior to her, "what misfortune do you see in that? In a few moments a cabinet-maker will fasten together these two pieces of ebony."

"Never mind," replied the young girl. "I persist in sustaining that the fall of my crucifix is an evil augury, and that it prognosticates nothing good."

"How, mademoiselle," replied the Superior; "you are superstitious; are you ignorant that religion forbids it?"

Mdlle. de Vigny said not a word. Inwardly I shared these fears, and I associated this fall of the crucifix with the accident which happened to the nuptial ring of Lucie de Pracontal, an accident which preceded only one hour, perhaps, the disappearance of that unfortunate creature.

Some frightful fits of coughing succeeded this explanation; one would almost have believed that the breast of Mdlle. de Vigny was going to break. During these spells, the face of the young lady became scarlet, and then the paleness of death succeeded rapidly to this purple color. This sight almost broke my heart. Mdlle. de Vigny perceived the grief that I experienced: she thanked me for it by a smile, whose expression cannot be painted in words.

Madame the Superior understood that the condition of her boarder demanded absolute repose; we therefore took leave of her. When retiring, I tremblingly asked of Mdlle. de Vigny permission to come and inquire about her health.

"To-morrow is Sunday," replied she; "this day is consecrated to prayer, and no one is admitted into the community; but, next Tuesday, I will be charmed if you will accompany Madame the Superior in the visit that she will make me, about three o'clock."

I went out from the Convent of the Benedictines deeply grieved.

Madame de Lesseville said: "You will see Mdlle. de Vigny as fresh as a rose next Tuesday, and the holy bonds of marriage will unite you in the beautiful month of May."

"I will accept it as an augury," replied I, slightly hesitating.

A brilliant sun brightened the arrival of this Tuesday. I went to hear the mass of the pastor; by one of those contrarieties for which men are not always prepared, it was a mass for the dead. This circumstance, very simple certainly, plunged me into the dark abyss of melancholy. I dragged myself, for several hours, along the boulevards, without well knowing whither I was directing my steps. With the desire of restoring my worn-out energies, I went to Father Guéret, whose aspect alone gave me confidence in myself. I told him part of my fears, occa-

sioned by this mass for the dead, which seemed to be a sorrowful presentiment in regard to Mdlle. de Vigny.

"Ah! if I am going to find her dead!" said I to him.

The pastor replied to me, this time very briefly, without having recourse to raillery:

"My child, you must cure yourself of these gloomy apprehensions, which may poison the rest of your life. If the condition of your dear invalid had grown any worse in a serious manner, Madame the Superior would have warned you of it by a note; you have then nothing to alarm you."

The pastor reduced me to silence by this one objection; my fears were calmed, and I recovered my assurance. I went to Pont-Neuf in a carriage in order to avoid all the disagreeable quarters filled with mud. I proposed to go on foot from the Louvre to the Convent of the Benedictines. Instead of getting out on the quay of the right shore, I directed myself to the opposite side, so as to examine the monuments with which this quay was furnished, over which I had never passed. The magnificent royal bridge fixed my attention. I crossed it, and found myself before the gate of the Garden of the Tuileries. At this moment a truth, very often repeated, appeared to me in all its force: the same objects present themselves under different aspects, according to the disposition of your mind. I had gone over the Garden of the Tuileries many times: noth-

ing there had astonished me then; my eyes disdained to contemplate the beautiful statues that offered themselves at every step. The magnificent decorations, formed by the flowering parterres and majestic walks, scarcely attracted my sight. I was wearing mourning in the depths of my heart; my life had faded forever; the pompous wonders of the palace of kings offered less charms to me then than the solitude of the forest.

Now, on this day, the Tuileries appeared to me an incomparable place, by its beauty and magnificence. The early flowers of the parterres enbalmed the air with their perfume, the shrubs were already sparkling with their brilliant ornaments, and the branches of the elms were growing green.

I was wandering down the grand walk; my step was quick and light. Having crossed the Pont Tourant, I gained the Ville l'Evêque Street, and I arrived in a few moments before the community of the Benedictines. The Superior received me with the same kindness. She did not conceal from me the cause of the grief the traces of which I saw spread over her face.

"The condition of Mdlle. de Vigny, far from becoming better, has grown still more serious; her cold has changed, according to the opinion of the physicians, into a pulmonary complaint: they have ordered that she shall carefully keep her bed. The maids who take care of her have not been able to keep her there. Our dear invalid has manifested the

most lively desire to see you; she has risen to receive you. We will find her lying on a lounge."

An announcement so alarming, suddenly changed to sadness the joy that I had before experienced. Trembling, I followed the Superior, who opened herself the door of the little parlor. My uneasy glance penetrated the room. O surprise! I stopped petrified. Mdlle. de Vigny was reclining on an easy chair like that in which I had seen the corpse of Mdlle. de Pracontal. An ottoman of velvet filled the office of a footstool, and supported the feet of the invalid. They had placed the easy-chair in a corner of the room, so as to avoid the rays of the sun, and prevent them striking across the face of the young lady—a position like that of Lucie in the dungeon of Monségur; and, to complete this terrible similarity, Mdlle. de Vigny, on perceiving us, commenced to smile, and exposed to view a row of beautiful teeth. I could never have believed that the ravages of illness could have been so rapid. Ah, according to the belief of Madame de Lesseville, I was to see Pauline again fresh as a rose.

Mdlle. de Vigny made a slight sign with her hand to invite me to be seated near her easy-chair. She said to the Superior, in a tone of displeasure:

"I have received a visit from my guardian; he cast upon me some avaricious glances, which seemed seeking to find out how many days I had yet to live."

"O Pauline, could you believe such perfidious calculations?" said the Superior to her.

"His sons, the nephews of my mother, are my

natural heirs. The love of the riches of this world is very powerful over the hearts of men. I do not say that for you, M. Maurice; in my eyes, you do not belong to that class of mortals: a truce at once to the subject of my guardian."

"Do you know," continued she, addressing herself to me, "I have mended my crucifix; see it. I present it to you; it is the only thing I can give you; you will take it away with you."

"I would not dare to deprive you of it," replied I, with great emotion.

"If I die," said she, "you will keep it as a testimonial of my esteem. If God deigns to preserve me upon earth, we will say our prayers morning and evening, beside one another, before this revered sign of our redemption."

At this moment, a loud and imperious voice was heard in the passage; it announced the approach of the physician, who entered the parlor quite suddenly.

"Madame Superior," said he, in a scolding tone, "such successive imprudences have placed our invalid in the dangerous condition in which she is at present. I prescribed that she should not be allowed to leave her bed, and I insist that she shall be placed there at once."

These words increased my uneasiness; they determined our speedy departure. I made my way trembling towards the door. Just at the moment when I was about to cross the door-sill, Mdlle. de Vigny said to me, in a voice almost extinguished:

"Maurice, I will tell my mother that I have given you her crucifix."

I descended the stairs with the wildness of a madman. I held concealed under my clothes the sacred object that an angel had just placed in hands so unworthy as mine. I followed by chance the first road that offered before me: it led me to the Garden of the Tuileries. I stopped at the sight of those trees, those beautiful walks, where I had lounged a few moments before, cradled in dreams of happiness. Not wishing to pass through them a second time in a mood so different, I plunged into St. Honoré Street, and, after a long journey, I arrived at my lodging overwhelmed with grief. I ran in the evening to the pastor to draw some consolation from his conversation. A superior man never resists evidence. Father Guéret appeared as much surprised as afflicted by the condition of Mdlle. de Vigny: a mournful silence replaced, this time, his amiable loquacity; the touching gift of the silver crucifix excited in him a feeling of tenderness.

"Let us implore for her," said he, "the mercy of God."

We both fell on our knees, and the rest of the day was passed in prayer.

The next day I presented myself, towards noon, at the parlor of the Benedictines. I found there a religious who said to me:

"Madame Superior has charged me to express to you the regret that she feels at not being able to

receive your visit to-day. Mdlle. de Vigny is much worse than yesterday. You will easily understand that propriety does not permit that you should go to see her."

I bowed before an observation as just as rigorous. I retraced, sadly, the road from the Marais. I shut myself up in my room, and remained prostrated before the silver crucifix, without thinking of going this evening to the Presbytery.

"Why," said I, "should I importune others with my own griefs?" But true friendship is intelligent. As nine o'clock struck I saw Father Guéret enter.

"I imagined," said he to me, "that the condition of Mdlle. de Vigny was worse, and you were afraid to come near me to speak of your sorrows, which are very just ones, most assuredly. You look upon this proceeding as an indiscretion; know then, my dear child, that there are bowels of compassion under the soutane. Every day, we priests of Paris distribute to the unfortunate alms of money, clothing, and nourishment; but we distribute also the alms of the heart: those are more difficult to practice than the first: we make them very often under gilded roofs. Your situation demands, on my part, some consolations: you do not come to seek them; I bring them to you."

These words drew from me tears of emotion. I threw myself into the arms of this worthy guardian, so very different from the one I had at Toulouse.

Thursday I presented myself at the parlor in the Ville l'Evêque Street. The nun said to me:

"They will administer the last sacraments to Mdlle. de Vigny this evening about four o'clock; the whole community are praying for her."

"Could I obtain," said I to her, "the favor of placing myself in the passage while the priest, who bears the Holy Viaticum, is passing?"

"Madame Superior has foreseen your demand," replied she to me; "you will be permitted to remain at the foot of the stairway that you mounted day before yesterday, to go to the apartment of the invalid; you will see it from here."

I went, while waiting, to the neighboring church to prostrate myself at the foot of the altar: it seemed that I was now completely detached from the earth. At four o'clock I came to occupy the post of honor that they had assigned to me. I remained there prostrated, not only during the solemn ceremony, but until the moment when it became necessary to close the outer doors of the community.

Friday, the 24th day of the month of April, I presented myself, as on the evening before, at the parlor of the Benedictines: the same nun received me without uttering a single word, and showed me with her hand, through the window, the drapery of white cloth, fastened with a black cross, that hung at the entrance to the stairway that led to the apartment of Mdlle. de Vigny.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUNERAL—AN UNEXPECTED DUEL—THE YOUNG BARON DE RABASTEINS RETURNS TO DAUPHINÉ AND EMBRACES THE MONASTIC LIFE IN THE ABBEY OF AIGUEBELLE.

CIRCUMSTANCES independent of my will had prevented me from presiding at the funeral of Madame de Rabasteins; I was dying when my mother descended to the tomb. I resolved this time to brave the sorrow by assisting at the obsequies of the young virgin, that heaven had seemed to have designed to become the companion of my life.

I knew from some information that I had gained in the parlor, that the funeral ceremony was to take place in the parish, and not in the chapel of the convent, as Mdlle. de Vigny did not belong to the community as a religious. I went there the next day, near eleven o'clock, at the church of the Madeleine; two or three ladies had already assembled there with the same intention. I remarked with pain the absence of Madame de Lesseville; perhaps she had turned back on the road at the sight of some bird

of ill omen. The funeral procession was not long in arriving: the guardian and his two sons were chief mourners; their easy step did not show deep grief; four or five old men, old friends of the family of Vigny, followed painfully the coffin of the young girl, whom they had known since her birth. What terrible sensations did I not experience, when I saw this bier passing before me, that inclosed all the happiness of my life. The three virginal crowns with which the pious Benedictines had decorated it, spoke to my heart a language that she alone could understand. I felt again some painful uneasiness, premonitory of a fainting spell, but I knew how to repress it by strength of will. I braced myself up with energy: it was necessary to accomplish my task. I had come to this place to water it with tears.

My resolution grew firmer during the mass. I congratulated myself inwardly upon my courage; but the blow was more violent when the moment arrived for my hand to sprinkle the holy water upon that body covered with the pall; my strength abandoned me; feeble humanity broke down; my sobs, suppressed for a long time, broke out loudly, which drew upon me the glance of the whole crowd: no one could mistake my part; the showers of tears which flowed from my eyes attested sufficiently that I was not one of the heirs of Mdlle. de Vigny.

They took the coffin to the parish cemetery,* quite

* In 1750 each parish had its own cemetery.

far off, however: the five or six old men did not accompany it there; without doubt they thought that they had already done much for an old friendship, to have come to the outskirts so far away to assist at the services. The burial of Mdlle. de Vigny had then for witnesses only the guardian, his sons, and the unfortunate Maurice: they both cast upon the latter some angry glances; his affliction tormented them, for it accused them of their coldness. At the moment when they let down the coffin into the grave, all my senses were overthrown; my mind wandered. I made a movement to seize the bier in my arms, and to entomb myself living with these sacred remains. One of the priests held me by the coat, saying, "Take care, sir, you will fall!" This strange voice recalled me to myself.

I went out of the cemetery with my eyes all dazzled; I saw nothing: it seemed that I no longer existed. I ran along the Street St. Honoré with hasty steps; the people who were coming in the opposite direction elbowed me unmercifully, for my preoccupation was such as to prevent my taking the necessary precautions to avoid these repeated shocks. I was about entering the Cardinal Square, when I ran violently against a very tall person: it was a perfumed fop, of about twenty-seven years of age, with embroidered vest, gimp coat, laced hat, and wearing a steel sword.

"Sir," said he to me in a passion, "you struck me."

"Oh! sir," replied I, "I did not strike you; we ran against one another: besides, I apologize."

"You struck me," repeated he, "and it shall not be with impunity."

Pronouncing these words he raised his cane to strike me: this gesture alone provoked on my part a feeling of anger and indignation, of which I did not believe myself capable, for such a circumstance had never presented itself. I felt myself another man; my sorrows, my misfortunes disappeared from my mind. I sprang upon this cane taken to break over me, and I tore it from the hands of the fop; he then took his sword.

"Softly, sir, the defence is not equal," said a second personage from behind me, and whom I had not perceived. "The gentleman has knocked against you, he has apologized; that ought to suffice, and you should not maltreat him."

"Eh! what is that to you? Is it your business?" replied the first stranger.

"Certainly, it is my business," replied my protector; "for I make it a business to defend the oppressed."

"This young man," continued the fop, "has offended me, and I wish to chastise him."

At this word *chastise* my fury redoubled. I wished to throw myself upon the impertinent, and break his cane over his face: not even the sight of the sword, drawn from the sheath, could intimidate me. The mediator placed himself between us, saying:

"Sir, since you think that this young man has injured you, he is of age to be able to make it right. I will act as his second, and we will conduct the business fair and square."

"Is he a gentleman? He does not wear a sword."

"I am a gentleman," replied I, "and I know well where to find the necessary arms."

"Ah, well! in one hour I will expect you on the Square of Victories."

"We will be there before you," replied my protector with cool assurance.*

The obliging stranger, about forty years of age, had an elaborate but stern appearance; the magnificent features of his face expressed at once mildness and pride. He drew me into a street not very far off, and entered the house of an armorer, who received him with a respectful deference, and as a person whom he had known for a long time. My defender said to the armorer:

"We must have, at once, some fighting swords."

They hastened to show him several. He handled them like a man who had used them frequently. This ease of manner with murderous weapons gave rise in me to a reflection capable of inspiring me with serious uneasiness. My hand had never touched the hilt of a sword: the education that Madame

* At the period of which M. de Rabasteins speaks, the mania for duelling was carried to madness. They were heard to say constantly in the most brilliant circles: "Who was killed yesterday?" "Who is going to fight to-day?"

de Rabasteins had given me, while near her, did not consider lessons in fencing as indispensable; and yet the young men of good families aimed to excel in this sort of exercise. This reflection, however, did not discourage me in the least. Besides, crushed under the heavy weight of sorrow, I did not attach the least value to life.

The choice of swords having been made, the generous stranger begged the armorer to procure for him one of those carriages that they call in Paris hacks. At the end of a few moments one of these carriages was standing before the door, and we were taken in five minutes to the Square of Victories. Having descended from the hack, we stationed ourselves near the iron railing that surrounds the superb statue erected in honor of Louis XIV. At this moment my noble defender said to me:

"You have replied, sir, to this fractious fellow, that you were a gentleman; may I know your name?"

"I am," replied I, "M. de Rabasteins."

"M. de Rabasteins!" cried the stranger. "Was your father killed in the lines of Philisbourg, sixteen years ago?"

"It was at the siege of that city that I had the misfortune of losing him. He fought in the squadrons of M. de Lautrec, my relation."

"Precisely. O providential encounter!" continued the stranger. "I am the Knight of la Barthe, your fellow-countryman; and still more, the com-

panion in arms of your unfortunate father. I owe you, for his sake, a true reparation; and I return thanks to heaven that such a singular chance has given me the occasion of proving to you my devotion. Your father merited, by his virtues, to be a subject of edification to the whole army of the Marshal de Berwick; he was, must I say it to the shame of the officers of this period, an object of derision. Myself—hear me—myself, I was of the number of those who joked him upon his devotion. I saw him, with my own eyes, expiring while reciting the *Our Father*. This sublime death produced upon me a marvellous effect: it recalled to my heart some sentiments of piety that had been forgotten for a long time: they were instilled into me during my youth by the heavenly woman who gave me birth; for, never doubt it, all virtues come to us from our mothers. These sentiments of piety I had lost in the midst of dissipation: they are now immovable, and cause the joy of my life. I owe this benefit to the glorious death of your father. You understand it," added he, taking my hands, "we are no longer strangers."

I remained confused. This encounter seemed to me such a wonder. Our conversation became very animated, and the outpouring of our mutual sentiments made us forget the unexpected quarrel in St. Honoré Street. My adversary, however, had not forgotten it. He arrived on the square soon after, in a hack, as we did; he made us a sign with

his hand. M. de la Barthe ran to his carriage-door and said to him most politely:

"Sir, we are at your command."

Our carriage followed his; we crossed the boulevards, and, after having travelled nearly an hour, we stopped outside the barrier of St. Denis. The hacks remained upon the road, and we all four, for my adversary took his second, entered into a labyrinth of lanes formed by the walls of a great number of gardens. The most spacious was chosen as a propitious place for the combat.

The conversation that I had just had with M. de la Barthe, the particulars of the death of my father, in touching my heart, had calmed the fury with which I was transported; but, when I found myself a second time in the presence of the insolent fop who had lately dared to raise a stick to me, my wrath was rekindled, and more violent and more terrible than ever.

"Sir," said my adversary to me, "do you assure me that you are a gentleman?"

"Yes, sir," replied I.

"And I am captain of the dragoons of Noailles," said M. de la Barthe, coldly. "I bear witness to it upon my honor; it is M. de Rabasteins."

"It is to be hoped," replied my enemy, "that the young man is not the last of his race. I am the Knight de Janville."

On saying these words, he took off his hat and his perfumed coat, and laid them upon the grass; then

he drew his sword, and commenced making thrusts. As I was, one may say, a novice in this profession, I occupied myself with imitating my adversary in his terrible preparations. But one thing surprised me: M. de la Barthe did not seek to conceal his indignation; he and the other second were just about drawing their swords from their sheaths.

I placed myself resolutely in front of M. de Janville, presenting to him with an awkward arm the end of my steel. The awkwardness did not exclude courage. My enemy easily made my sword fly. At this moment, M. de la Barthe taking me by the shoulder threw me to one side and took my place, saying:

"I will not permit you to assassinate M. de Rabasteins, who has never handled arms, it is easy to convince yourself of that; I take upon myself the quarrel."

At the same instant, the contest commences between the two champions; the clicking of swords is heard.

"Stop!" cried I, throwing myself through the swords: that of M. de Janville just tore my cheek; but, in a second, my adversary had his right side run through and through. M. de la Barthe took a step back in drawing out the homicidal steel, and M. de Janville fell upon his knees. All this passed with the rapidity of lightning.

The sight of this man deluged with blood made me forget my own situation. Pity succeeded to

anger. I ran to lavish upon him all my care. M. de la Barthe, having picked up my clothes, dragged me violently away from this fatal place, saying to me that the second of M. de Janville was sufficient to help him.

"But he is going to expire!" I exclaimed.

"Do not believe that: this adventure will be worth to him six months of salutary reflections passed upon his bed, if they put him there in good order. These professional fighters would cut the throats of an honest man like a chicken. Let us regain our carriage, quickly," continued he; "the sergeant of the watch could very well arrest us. They are charmed to lay their hands on some officer, and we might, perhaps, sleep this evening in the Bastile."

I shuddered on hearing these words. I did not fear death; but the word alone of prison, of Bastile, caused me a fright. We mounted the hack rapidly.

M. de la Barthe cried to the coachman: "There are two crowns for the fare; quick, fly!"

The man took us with all the swiftness of his horses. During the journey my generous companion said to me: "They fight every day, and yet there is great severity for these kind of quarrels. The King shows himself very angry in regard to those magistrates who do not know how to prevent these misfortunes, and who do not prevent these duels taking place, even at Versailles, almost under the windows of the sovereign. I will not return this evening to my lodging, and, to-morrow evening, I shall take the road to Mézières, where I shall find

my regiment. I advise you to absent yourself for some time from Paris."

The hack stopped at the Royal Square as we ordered. M. de la Barthe embraced me in the most affectionate manner, and left me after a few moments' conversation, advising me a second time to leave the city as soon as possible. When his departure, or rather his disappearance, had restored me to myself, I fell into despair. What a hard day I had just passed! I wished to return to the scene of combat to assist M. de Janville; but, in the midst of the labyrinth formed around the capital and its outskirts, how could I find again the sad lane where my adversary had led us? This simple reflection stopped my steps, which were turned towards the direction of the boulevards: an image of the weakness of man—the lightest incident overthrows the best-combined plans. Besides, my own condition demanded some assistance. When I dared for a single instant to remove my handkerchief from the wounded cheek, the blood commenced to flow. I saw myself obliged to regain my lodging very quickly; a physician was called. On examining the wound, he said:

"It is a sword-thrust; I see that now: the eye has been seriously threatened, but the wound is confined to a puncture; it will heal in a few days. It is necessary, however, to apply to the wound a dressing and some bandages, which will conceal half of the face."

I showed perfect docility. When night had arrived, I went to the presbytery of the church of St. Paul. At the sight of my face covered with bandages, the pastor uttered a cry of fright. I was obliged to take care and reassure him at once on my part. I commenced to relate to him my tragic adventure; but scarcely had I pronounced the word duel, than the pastor of St. Paul interrupted me quickly by saying:

"Stop, sir; I cannot hear you any more. I believed at first that these wounds were the result of an accident, of a fall; but they are the consequences of a horrible combat of which I cannot listen to the details. These combats are proscribed by the laws of our country, and still more by the divine laws. You have turned a homicidal steel against the bosom of one of your brothers, of a Christian like yourself. Ah! unhappy one, if, guided by a spirit of vengeance, *you* had received the mortal blow, think of the sad consequences? Was your soul prepared? Was it not in a state of sin?"

The voice of the pastor became thundering. I shuddered, and the worthy priest, continuing his rebuke, made many remarks on the subject of duelling, which would have softened the most hardened heart. Impressed with the truths which flowed from his mouth, I confessed myself guilty, saying to him, "But what can I do?"

The pastor of St. Paul, pointing to the crucifix which stood upon his *prie-Dieu*, replied: "You must

ask pardon of the Creator, by making an act of contrition in the most humble manner possible."

At the same moment I fell on my knees before the image of the Redeemer of men, and my protector placed himself also on his knees beside me. The prayer being finished, we rose again. The face of Father Guéret had recovered its serenity; his features expressed only compassion. I related to him then all the incidents of this desolate day. While listening to my recital, the pastor of St. Paul uttered some exclamations of sorrow.

"You see," said I to him, "when finishing my deplorable narration, my contact, my approach alone brings death! I caused the death of my mother by a mysterious disappearance. Mdlle. de Vigny saw me twice. She expressed in my regard some interest; God punished her immediately. The young girl sank in three days under the attack of an illness generally so light. A man, in the flower of his life, going out from his house in the morning, his head filled perhaps with projects of happiness, he runs against me in the street, and, a few moments after, the lightning strikes him; he is overthrown in the dust; his blood flows in great streams; and I am not permitted to run to his assistance. The fact is certain, my dear pastor, I am a reprobate. Each one of my steps is marked by some catastrophe, of which the people who approach me become the victims. I ought to cover my head with ashes, to veil my face,

and to bury in the depths of a cloister an existence that is so sad to others."

I experienced while speaking a sort of delirium. I ran through the room like a madman. In our preceding conversations, Father Guéret found wonderful replies to all my objections; this time he did not even try to temper the violence of my discourse. He appeared changed, and preserved a deep silence, while the greatness of my misfortunes astonished his mind. After quite a long space of time, he embraced me, saying:

"My child, there are some misfortunes near which the consolations of men are only like a vain smoke. God alone can offer you some compensation for the evils that you suffer. Yes, God calls you unquestionably to himself. Obey his will. It is for you the only way of salvation."

My sentence had just been pronounced. After having heard it, I felt my whole heart penetrated with hope, as the shipwrecked take courage at the sight of the boat that comes to gather them up from the midst of the waves. I then told the pastor of the fears that M. de la Barthe had communicated to me on the subject of the disagreeable consequences that this duel might have for me.

"I fear them as well as he," replied he. "The King and his ministers show themselves inexorable in regard to those persons who infringe upon the laws that are promulgated to repress the rage for duelling. The Bastile is crowded with gentlemen

who have had the misfortune to kill their adversaries. They treat with the same severity those who have served as seconds in these fatal encounters. Father Griffet, one of the confessors of the Bastile, has told me of several officers who were detained in this prison on this account for ten years. They would have died there if their relations had not had influence enough to take them out."

The latter part of this discourse caused me true fear. I expressed to the good pastor the intention I had of leaving Paris the next day. He approved of my resolution. I begged him specially to find out if M. de Janville had died the same day; if he left a wife and children; and, in short, in what condition he found his family. My design was to consecrate to him in atonement a part of my fortune.

I left Father Guéret in the early part of the night. At the moment of separation we lavished upon each other reciprocally the testimony of the most sincere friendship. The next day, in the morning, before six o'clock, I was in my postchaise flying over the road of the Bourbonnais. The same evening that preceded my departure, I raised the crucifix from the ebony cross, and I suspended it from my neck by means of a silken cord passed through the hands, as Mdlle. de Vigny had shown me. This silver crucifix became my safeguard—the shield against my passions. I was never separated from it, and I hope that it will accompany me to my last home. How many tears I shed during the rapid journey from

the shores of the Seine to the shores of the Loire. The aspect of nature, blooming in all its rich and flowering beauty, did not bring the slightest diversion to my wearied and depressed spirits. Horrible dreams did not cease attacking me during the three nights that I passed in the hotels. My mother, Lucie de Pracontal, Pauline de Vigny, and the Knight de Janville appeared in turn, and pursued me with their vengeance.

With the hope of procuring for myself a sound sleep through the means of some forced exercise, I resolved to walk one half of the relays, keeping my postchaise in sight. Four leagues after we left Moulins the route became more difficult than usual. I was walking quietly beside my carriage, when I perceived not far from Varennes, a group of two or three persons who came out of the town; one of them played gambols before the other two. I drew near the postilion and asked who these people were?

"They are," replied he to me, "some newly-married ones from the village."

"And not a relation, not a friend accompanies them," observed I to him.

In a few moments I found myself in front of this wedding party of which a hurdy-gurdy player headed the procession. The man, coarsely but neatly clothed, seemed to be about twenty-six years of age, the woman, young in proportion, wore a straw hat lined with blue stuff, and of a very odd shape; from the neck of the bride hung a very small silver cross: this

cross composed her entire finery. A spray of orange blossoms decorated the bodice of the villager: this modest bouquet was to prove to the eyes of the world the virginal purity of the bride; her face bore witness to it still more. These two physiognomies, bearing the impress of goodness, expressed an ineffable joy. The young woman held her husband strongly by the arm, as if she feared that he might be carried off.

I took the liberty of stopping the wedding party in their triumphal march, saying to the couple:

"From whence do you come, my good people?"

"We have just been married in the parish, and we are going to Father Anthony's farm, who is the master of both of us."

"Ah! you are alone?"

"To our cost! We are orphans, we have neither fathers nor mothers, nor relations."

"Not even a godmother," added the woman.

"Let us see; how much have you two between you on getting married?"

"How much have we?" said the young man; "eh! nothing, then."

Both commenced to laugh aloud, looking at one another.

"Sir," replied the bride, "we have arms and strength; we will do like others."

At this moment God inspired me with a good thought. I had cast misfortune upon those who had crossed my path; profiting by this meeting I decided

to expiate a small part of the evil that I had involuntarily caused.

"My good friends, retrace your steps," said I to these people; "let us go together to the village notary of Varennes, I have something very important to communicate to you."

"To the house of the village notary!" cried the frightened bride, "I do not wish to go."

The young man, astonished, hesitated without speaking.

"Go on then, it is for your good," exclaimed the postilion to them, in a rude voice, from his horse.

The rustic wedding retook the road to the town of Varennes; the procession was increased by a person weighed down and overcome by the gifts of fortune, and who would willingly have exchanged his destiny with that of a simple villager. They led us to the house of the village notary, where I had a document drawn out, by which M. de Rabasteins settled an income of six hundred pounds on the couple who had met him on the road on the first day of their marriage.

Good actions always bring calm to the soul, and the agitated feelings are all tranquilized; ineffable joy accompanies them. The happy ones of this world are not always convinced of this truth. I tasted, the following nights, a more peaceful sleep; sorrowful faces and restless dreams came no longer to trouble my rest. I arrived the day after at Lyons. When I passed through this city eight

months before, I said to myself, with extreme grief, "What was I at the time when I came here first?" What a difference between the two positions! The society of my mother filled then all my wishes; the thought of losing her had never occupied my mind: my love for her made me regard her as immortal. I did not think in the journey that preceded this one, when I was deploring so bitterly the frightful blow that had just taken her away, that I could possibly become more unhappy still. Now, towards the middle of 1750, the new misfortunes with which the poor orphan saw himself overcome, made him desire to return to the position that he regarded formerly as intolerable. The man who gives up without ceasing to useless regrets, can only say, while descending each step of his life: "Ah! if I had known yesterday!"

I reached Monségur in the last week of May. The most perfect calm reigned in the little town, that I had seen so animated during some events of which my sudden disappearance was the first episode. Would you believe it, this tranquillity displeased me when my heart was troubled; but Christian humility repressed immediately this inconceivable moment of pride. My first care was to go and kneel at the tomb of my mother. What a surprise I experienced on seeing it covered with little white and blue flowers: they adorned and encircled the entire tombstone. I asked Hubert, who accompanied me, if his hand had sown this pretty border? He replied to me:

"I did not sow them; but Clotilde came often to place flowers upon the tomb of our dear mistress, and perhaps these lilies of the valley and these daisies may have reproduced themselves; but it appears to me very extraordinary."

"God permits," replied I, "that the dust of virtue may generate flowers; will our ashes produce as much?"

After having consecrated a few days to the regulation of several matters of interest, I thought to pursue the conclusion of the business that I placed above all others. I went to St. Paul Trois Châteaux, to Father Lambert. On perceiving me, the worthy prelate extended his arms to me, and pressed me to his heart.

"My Father," said I to him, "you have submitted me to some trials: I have passed through them; they have been very hard. Now that my task is accomplished, I come a second time to embrace your knees, begging you to open to me the only way that can lead the orphan to happiness."

The Bishop appeared deeply moved, and replied to me:

"My child, I know all; Father Guéret has not left me in ignorance. I have been able to sound the depth of your misfortune, and since you persist in wishing to seek consolation only in a retreat from the world, in which every moment must be consecrated to God alone, I shall no longer oppose your pious design, and shall only consider myself too happy in being able to contribute to your felicity."

The choice of the monastic order had been decided for a long time in my mind; the study of the Latin Fathers had led me naturally to examine in detail the lives of the holy persons that the Church recommends to the veneration of the faithful. I felt myself filled with enthusiasm for St. Bernarde, the most powerful genius of the middle ages, the great reformer of his century. I aspired then to the happiness of being admitted into the order founded by this illustrious champion of the faith. Happily the diocese of St. Paul Trois Châteaux possessed an abbey of this order, which was at the same time a noviciate. It was situated in a pretty town called Aiguebelle. Thus all my desires were gratified, for I should have regretted intensely to have been obliged to leave the Dauphiné.

Father Lambert wrote in my regard to the commendatory Abbot, and, at the end of a few weeks, I was permitted to enter the community. I experienced the most extraordinary sensations when I crossed the threshold of this house, which was to become for the orphan a safe asylum against any new storms. I appreciated very quickly the sweetness of my new existence. It was not long in reconciling me with myself. The remembrance of my misfortunes faded away in the midst of my meditations; however, will you believe it, my brothers? after twenty-six years, I still experience an involuntary emotion when the bell rings to assemble in the chapel, and we commence together the *morning prayer*.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BARON DE RABASTEINS VISITS PARIS A SECOND TIME—VERY EXTRAORDINARY ENCOUNTER.

I TASTED for more than a quarter of a century the calm to which I had aspired with so much ardor after my misfortune. Each evening I said to myself? "This is the end of a day that has passed very peacefully; perhaps it would have terminated in some catastrophe if I had continued to live in the world." I imagined that my career would thus flow on sheltered from new shocks, and that I would never again leave the sweet valley of Aiguebelle. God had ordained otherwise. In the month of March, 1776, I received an order from my Superiors to go to Lyons, where several commendatory Abbots of this order were assembled. I was to assist at this convocation as deputy of the Prior of Aiguebelle, whose serious infirmities prevented him from travelling. Father Lambert, the venerable Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux, who had opened to me the way of salvation, occupied still the same see. I went to pay my

respects at his feet, and ask his blessing on my departure. I chanced to question him on the motive of my mission. The prelate, in consideration of our old friendship, wished much to reveal to me some very strange facts: this is the substance of his discourse:

"My son," said he to me, "amongst all the advantages that the solitude of the cloister may offer to a man of your character, the most precious, without doubt, is that of being ignorant of all that passes in the world from which you have separated voluntarily. You will learn, then, with fear, one thing that can be no longer concealed from you. It is developing itself every day more and more among the higher classes, and even among the middle classes in the cities; and that is, a spirit of impiety which tends to insanity. The fundamental principles of our religion are each day questioned in writings, where the boldness of ideas disputes it with the most cynical expressions. The religious orders are exposed to the most violent attacks; they complain that they are blazing abroad on their part the grossest calumnies, and, I must confess it, quite a large number of bishops have expressed some very displeasing opinions with regard to the monastic life. The most terrible blows are given to you by men who seem animated with good intentions.

"These adversaries do not stop at any mercenary accusations of which the monks have become the object, contesting the legitimacy of their property,

and signalizing as an intolerable abuse, the revenues that the abbeys pay every year to the Court of Rome. These accusations are not new, but they recur now more energetically and more eagerly, because your detractors hope to triumph in the favor of a new reign. On mounting the throne, each king manifests the intention of destroying these abuses, a very praiseworthy thing most assuredly, but very difficult to execute in the right way. The heads of the orders, frightened at the perils that threaten their numerous communities, have resolved to unite together in a synod, at Paris, to consult upon the means of defending themselves from the more terrible blows that they are preparing to hurl against them. The Legate of the Pope has received from the Court of Rome the necessary instructions to enable him to place himself in a condition to lend to the heads of the orders a salutary assistance. Your Superiors, my son, have thought that your former position of fortune and birth might, in this case, be of use to the general welfare. It is not then only to Lyons that you should go, but as well to Paris. You see, the will of man is as fragile in the cloister as in the midst of society. You have made the vow of obedience on taking the monastic habit, and your state imposes upon you to-day the obligation of going to visit again a city that you abandoned formerly, when wearied, flying from it with the firm resolution of never returning."

The words of the Bishop struck me with astonish-

ment; my lips could not utter a single word. I return to Paris! It was necessary to obey. At the moment of my departure, the Bishop informed me that I would no longer find Father Guéret there, the pastor of St. Paul; that worthy priest had died about ten years before. Father Lambert gave me letters to M. de Cossay, a counsellor at the Court of Assistance, one of his relations, a man very devoted to the interests of the Church, and whose acquaintance would be of great use to me. Before leaving Dauphiné, I went to pray at the tomb of my mother. Coming from this pious visit, I felt myself stronger and better able to weather the new storms with which my life seemed to be threatened.

Early in April I arrived at Lyons, and I revisited this city with the sweetest satisfaction. A few years before, a gentleman from Lyons, who was visiting and travelling through Dauphiné, sight-seeing, stopped several days at the Abbey of Aiguebelle. Chance caused me to discover that his mother had been the intimate friend of Madame de Rabasteins and her companion at the convent. From this moment a close connection was established between us. I did not lose the occasion of asking a fellow-traveller to give me his address. My first visit, then, on arriving, was to M. Brossat, one of the notables of the city, and consular agent for the Prince Palatine of Deux-Ponts. I had gone, naturally with the religious community, to the house of the Minimes, but M. Brossat wished that I should lodge with him;

he insisted, with much politeness, that I should take lodgings in his house, in St. Nizier Square. Among the persons that my host saw most intimately, I mention M. de Chazelles, captain of one of the quarters of the city, and M. Dandé and M. Nolhac, both old aldermen. These gentlemen, zealous Christians, and well posted about all that was passing, confirmed all that the Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux had said to me on the subject of the dangers that threatened the monastic life; they even added some details which proved that Father Lambert had kept very far within the whole truth.

At the end of a few days, over forty religious of different orders arrived at Lyons, the great part of them Priors of monasteries; they came from Languedoc, Provence, or Dauphiné. They all assembled in conference at the house of the Father Superior of the Gray Friars of St. Bonaventure, in order to receive the instructions that the heads of the orders were dispatching to us. After three weeks' waiting, we were ordered to go to Paris without any delay. At the moment when we were all making our preparations for departure, a messenger from the Archbishop announced to us that we were convoked for the next day, in the usual place of our meetings, to receive there some communications which were to be given by Father de Montpezat, one of the vicar-generals. This announcement caused much surprise among us. Father de Montpezat arrived at the time specified, and invited us, in the name of

my Lord Bishop, to delay our departure for a week, advising us, in this interval, to procure for ourselves the dress of the secular clergy, to let our hair grow, to cut our beards, and to leave off, in this journey, the white or brown robes, as well as all other distinctive signs of the monastic rule. The Vicar-general, in a rather embarrassed discourse, declared to us that the Archbishop had received instructions emanating from the ministerial power; these instructions were to prevent the envoys of the monasteries from arriving at Paris in their usual dress; for they feared that the sight of the woollen robes of these orders, and their large rosaries, would only produce a very disagreeable impression among the inhabitants of the capital, already very strongly prejudiced against the monks. Every one of us was filled with consternation on hearing the speech of the Vicar-general. This strange announcement confirmed, in a startling manner, that which had been said to me by the Bishop of St. Paul Trois Châteaux, and by my host, M. Brossat.

We left Lyons not very confident. They had taken the precaution to make us set out in bands, several days intervening between the starting of each band, and pointing out to us the two routes, that of the Bourgogne and that of the Bourbonnais. I did not wear in my dress any indication of the monastic state, but I preserved preciously upon my breast the silver crucifix, from which I had never been separated from the time of the sad funeral of April 24th, 1750.

All the Priors arranged, however, that our true dress should accompany us with the baggage, looking upon them as indispensable when they gathered together the envoys of the abbeys in the general assembly. The journey was long and quite disagreeable; we did not always find friendliness in the secular clergy.

What a sensation the sight of Paris produced in me. A thousand varied thoughts troubled my heart. I went down naturally to the house of our order, in St. James Street; it was crowded with the deputies from the monasteries situated in the provinces in the centre and the western part of the kingdom; but we attached small value to the comforts of life.

The day after my arrival I presented myself at the house of M. de Coussay, desiring to give him the letter with which the Bishop had charged me to him. The counsellor of the Court of Protection received me in the most affectionate manner; he did not fear to announce himself immediately as a zealous defender of the interests of the Church, and of the monastic orders especially. M. de Coussay, perfectly well posted in all that was passing, said to me:

"You must be horribly uncomfortable at the Bernadines; I absolutely wish that you would take a lodging in my house, which will not prevent you from assisting at the assemblies of the regular clergy. I can mention to you at the Marais, or at the Royal Square, twenty counsellors of the Parliament and of the Exchequer, who have received at their houses

some good father, Benedictine, Carmelite, or Augustine."

My resistance yielded before this last consideration, I confess it to my shame. I should have, without doubt, have done better not to have separated from the brotherhood; my heart, I saw with pain, preserved still for the world a sort of attachment.

The day after, I installed myself then in St. Giles Street, at the house of M. de Coussay. His house offered a great analogy with that of M. de Bauche: the society of both was composed of the same elements. My private conversation with M. de Coussay offered me many more charms, as all that he related was entirely new for me: he, on his part, laughed at my ignorance; but the discourse of my host caused me sometimes fear from its gloomy coloring.

"There is manifest in the public mind," said M. de Coussay, "a diabolical effervescence, to which the best people cannot remain ignorant; according to the learned men of the day, from the time that the new reign commences, everything must change. The country is prosperous, the nation is happy, that does not suffer the least doubt, and yet, discontent arises everywhere. The people are jealous of the middle classes, the middle classes are jealous of the bankers, these envy the position of the courtiers; the nobility of the provinces detest the nobility of the court; the rank of dress abhors the rank of the sword; in short, to finish the picture, the inferior clergy cabal against the bishops, and these, with

only a few exceptions, work with zeal for the destruction of the monastic orders, who they think are too independent of their jurisdiction. Heaven has just given us for a King an angel of virtue, of religion, of integrity; never has a sovereign desired so much the happiness of his people; he wishes to see everything through his eyes, but they complain of only showing him the abuses, and by dint of reforming, they will throw the edifice to the ground."

M. de Coussay finished his peroration by saying: "You will indeed be happy if they offer you the chance of looking upon the features of our young King."

I replied to him: "Such a favor will crown all my wishes, and atone for the fatigues of such a long journey."

"The King," replied my host, "is visiting just now the principal colleges of Paris. Thursday next he is to honor with his presence that of Louis le Grand. I have been happy enough to render some signal services to the principal, M. Poignard; he has invited me to this feast, and, if you will permit me, I will take you there with me: these are some solemnities that the gravity of your state cannot forbid; I hope that the remembrance of these will be engraven on your mind."

I showed an impatience, without equal, to see this Thursday arrive, so much to be desired. We went to the College Louis le Grand immediately after dinner: the adjacent streets were entirely obstructed;

it was necessary to redouble our efforts to pierce through the crowd. We entered the College through a little door that led to a stairway leading to the infirmary; the principal placed us opposite to a gallery that had been erected in one of the windows of the refectory: they had arranged this large room for the reception of the Sovereign. Towards three o'clock, the acclamations of the people announced the approach of his Majesty. I was detached from the things of this world, and yet my heart beat with violence at the expectation alone of seeing appear before my eyes the father of his country. The cries of joy became so noisy, that the vaults of the hall seemed ready to fall to pieces; at last, the Monarch was introduced by the dignitaries of the universities. All the pupils were ranged on one side: two of these young people advanced towards the King to present him with a congratulatory address in Latin, and one in French. The Prince listened very attentively to the Latin, which was delivered with clearness and precision. The pupil who was to give the address in French was less happy; his emotion prevented him from speaking, and sobs interrupted his voice several times. The King was pleased to give him some encouragement with a true paternal goodness. They told me that this young man, with the expansive heart, enjoyed his education at the expense of M. de Conzié, Bishop of Arras.* All the spectators,

* This young man with the expansive heart was Robespierre.

without exception, showed themselves equally moved. As for me, I was dazzled, I no longer saw ; I scarcely dared to fix my glance upon this sacred head, to which was attached the destinies of the people. An air of grandeur was spread over the person of Louis XVI; but his uncertain step seemed to betoken a certain timidity. The King addressed some questions in a very strong voice to the professors of mathematics, and to the professor of geography.

This visit to the College of Louis le Grand interested me in the highest degree. My host wished to place the crowning point on the enjoyment of the day by inviting me to pass the evening in his drawing-room, where there was a reunion every Thursday of some magistrates from several sovereign courts. They mentioned to me, among them, MM. de Chevigné, d'Outremont, de Pontcarré, de Malezieux, counsellors to Parliament; MM. Amyot and de Cadencourt of the Exchequer; MM. de Maussion and de la Fortelle, of the Court of Protection. In this society, M. de Barentin, the first president of the Court of Protection, held the place that M. Gilbert des Voisins occupied at the house of M. de Bauche, when on my visit to Paris in 1750. I imagined that I should see an old man in the one who was invested with one of the most eminent dignities of the magistracy; what was my astonishment on seeing appear a man of thirty-eight or forty years. It would be difficult to describe a more beautiful face for a magistrate: his speech, grave and concise,

commanded attention. The visit of the King to the College of Louis le Grand became naturally the subject of conversation. M. de Coussay took pleasure in remarking the testimonials of love that the Prince had received from the people, who followed him in crowds.

"That which you relate," said M. de Barentin, "on the subject of the eagerness of the Parisians for their King, causes me true joy, for I think that, in all modern time, no sovereign has ever merited so well the attachment of his subjects as our young King. Nothing can be compared to his zeal for the good of his country; every moment of the day is consecrated by him to some serious work, without the least distraction causing him to turn aside from his task. The ministers are as astonished at his application as at his aptitude; how God alone gives him strength to surmount the immense difficulties which are springing at every step. The most alarming symptoms are showing themselves in all parts. That which should cause good people the most uneasiness, is the downfall of the public mind. In the last century, the French prided themselves for being held up as a model for the rest of Europe; now they take pleasure in imitating servilely the customs of strangers. You may believe that time will finish by correcting this generation of such madness, but there exists a mania whose consequences will necessarily be much more serious. This mania consists in depreciating all that has been done in time past, in

striking with anathema the works of our fathers; no reputation, no glory is now sheltered from the critic. Among the most illustrious personages of our history, is distinguished a heroine that other nations have envied us, for the annals of no other people can offer a parallel character. This woman, animated with the spirit of God, armed her feeble arm for the deliverance of her country; her words and her example electrified the populations who, from that moment, awoke from their apathy, working with zeal to shake off the detestable yoke of the English. This woman, this angel of virtue, lost her life while accomplishing this memorable mission. But, you know it as well as I, gentlemen, she did not perish in a sudden manner, struck by a spear in the midst of the battle; Jeanne d'Arc expired at a stake, in the flames, like a martyr. One can never hear the recital of her death without feeling moved to tears, and without being filled with indignation against her executioners. Ah, well! the greatest poet of the eighteenth century has not feared to soil his pen by writing, upon so chaste a subject, the most impious poem, in which he casts abroad a ridiculous infamy on the memory of the heroine who shed her blood for the cause of her country. The author of such a work merited to be pursued as a bad Frenchman, and to incur the blame of all good people. Far from that, they celebrated his name, and the world clapped their hands. This world, of which I speak, is not that which runs through the

streets; this world goes generally in carriages, and frequents the palaces of our kings."

The noble words of M. de Barentin were not contradicted. They struck me with admiration; but a part of this discourse was unintelligible to me. Wishing to be enlightened, I timidly addressed some questions to M. de Coussay on the subject of this impious work that M. de Barentin had just pointed out for public detestation. My question excited a laugh among these counsellors. My host, raising his voice, said:

"M. President, here is a good Bernadine father, who arrives from his monastery, situated in the heart of the Dauphiné. He has remained there for a quarter of a century without going out and without communicating with the world. He knew neither the work nor the name of the guilty one upon whom should fall all your anathemas."

"Ah! in mercy, gentlemen," cried M. de Barentin, "leave him in his happy ignorance."

M. de Pontcarré, counsellor for Parliament, then said:

"I agree entirely with the opinion of the first president on the subject of the alarming symptoms which are manifesting themselves in all ranks of society. The higher classes do not fear to find fault openly with all acts emanating from the sovereign power, in compensation for which the populace are very threatening in their manners. This is constantly presented to the eyes of strangers visiting

Paris. I heard, at the house of Marshal de Brissac, one word uttered by the Archduke Joseph, the brother of the Queen, who came lately, as you all know, to pass a few days at Versailles. This word denotes some apprehensions of the same nature. The Germanic Prince showed himself very eager to examine all the curiosities of Paris. Louis XVI., seeing him returning from one of these excursions, asked him in a proud tone how he liked the capital. 'Very large and very beautiful,' replied the Archduke. 'However, one very serious inconvenience accompanies all these advantage.' 'What is this inconvenience?' asked the King, quite astonished. 'It is that by means of such a capital a King may be dethroned in one afternoon.'"

"The opinion of the Archduke Joseph," said M. de Chevigné, counsellor for Parliament, "cannot have much weight with sensible people. They represent this Prince as an odd, eccentric mind; he has given proofs of recklessness on many occasions during his sojourn in France. The desire to visit the magnificent port of Toulon drew him to Provence. They were about, on his entreaties, to launch into the water a vessel of the line. The Minister of the Navy ordered them to hold back the operation until the arrival of the strange Prince, in order to give him the pleasure of assisting at such an imposing spectacle. The Archduke was astonished, and employed every moment of his sojourn at Toulon in visits made on board some vessels that had en-

tered the port. The Prince could not occupy his leisure moments in a more noble manner, but he made himself ridiculous by asking the marine officers the most difficult questions, with the very marked intention of putting their knowledge at fault. I will mention one single example. Being on board the Trident, one of the finest vessels in the royal navy, he conceived the whim of asking the commander, M. de Ternay, how many nails were used in the construction of a vessel of a hundred cannons. The officer, without hesitating one second, replied: 'Ten thousand five hundred and fifty-one.' The Archduke, caught in his own trap, made a truce to his indiscreet questions."

"It seems that the Germans are not always successful when they wish to cast any blame on the French," said M. d'Oútremont at this moment. "Here is an account as spicy of M. Lenoïr, our lieutenant-general of Police; I heard it related yesterday, at the house of President Molé, by a person very well informed. The second son of the Grand Palatine of Hungary was assassinated a year ago, in the streets of Vienna; this event cast terror throughout the capital of Austria. The Empress ordered them to spare no efforts to discover the author of this heinous crime; but the most minute investigations led to no satisfactory results. Three months after, the magistrates of Vienna learned, with certainty, according to their account, that the assassin had taken refuge in France, that he had been seen

in Paris, frequenting the public places without the least uneasiness in the world. Count Mercy d'Argenteau, ambassador of her Imperial Majesty, was ordered to demand of the Court of France the extradition of the criminal. The Keeper of the Seals fulfilled all the necessary formalities, and ordered M. Lenoir to proceed in arresting the stranger, who had been pointed out in the most precise terms. After some weeks of very active search, M. Lenoir replied that the man in question had never appeared in Paris, and that the magistrates of Vienna were not rightly informed. Count Mercy d'Argenteau transmitted to his court this information; they received it with a sort of contemptuous raillery. The Austrian authorities did not fear turning into derision this French police so renowned, and above all M. Lenoir, of whom every one boasted of his address and penetration; in short, they persisted in asserting that the assassin of the young Prince Palatine was amusing himself in Paris, right in the face of the lieutenant of the police and their bloodhounds. These malicious imputations naturally shocked the feelings of the Baron of Bréteuil, ambassador of France, who hastened to write to our minister of these strange matters; he added to his dispatch some new information about this affair. M. Lenoir, informed of what was passing, took offence and spared no efforts to obtain a happy result. At the end of two months he replied to M. de Bréteuil in the following terms: 'The assassin, to whose arrest the ministers of Her

Imperial Majesty attach so great a price, not only has not been to Paris, but has never left Vienna. He lives in some outskirt, and disguises himself under the dress of an Armenian merchant; he always wears a plaster over the left eye.' The German authorities, guided by this information, found the man and carried him off bodily. You may well judge that the jesting ceased, and gave way to admiration. The Empress ordered her ambassador at Paris to express to M. Lenoir her entire satisfaction."

This evening passed at the house of M. de Coussay did not finish in so sad a manner for me as that of M. de Bauche, twenty-six years before; but the next day I experienced a defeat which I did not expect. I went Friday morning to the Little Fathers, where the deputy priors of the monasteries were to assemble. The most alarming reports were circulated in the assembly. I learned there that the court, the ministers, many magistrates and some of the bishops manifested some hostile intentions in our regard: they were just about speaking of the next sale of the property of the regular clergy. Our superiors decided that the envoys should not present any reclamations, and that it would be necessary to let the storm pass over without raising a murmur. I regained the Marais very much saddened with what I had just heard. On arriving at the hotel of M. de Coussay, the porter gave me a letter that a servant had given him for me; it bore the address: "To

Baron de Rabasteins, Knight of Malta." This letter could not be destined for any other, since I was the only one of my name. These are the terms of the missive:

"Sir Baron de Rabasteins must have learned to manage a sword since he entered into the Order of Malta; he must be less of a novice than in 1750. I summon him, for to-morrow, Saturday, to give me satisfaction for the injury that he inflicted on me then, under the pain of being marked as a coward.

"KNIGHT DE JANVILLE."

This note gave me a terrible blow. The blood that I had received from my ancestors commenced to boil in my veins, and although clothed in the dress of a monk, I could not support the epithet of coward. Miserable pride of man! Without doubt, some circumstance was owing to chance, that the Knight de Janville had learned of my presence in Paris and my residence. They must have told him that I belonged to some religious order, that of Malta, of which all the members spring from the nobility. He did not seek any other information, and must have written under the influence of anger. A postscript added to the note appointed three o'clock at the Square of Victories as the place of meeting; this seemed to me significant. I did not hesitate in taking a decided resolution: it did not enter into my mind to seek to shun a meeting by

any means whatever. I made up my mind to reply to the challenge in a manner worthy of my new position. I went in all haste to our house of Bernardines, in order to implore there the assistance of a prior, whose firm character might serve me admirably on this occasion. I did not conceal from him anything of my old quarrel with M. de Janville, who I had believed dead of his wound for twenty-six years. M. de la Barthe had said truly when he assured me that the conquered one should be left on his bed for six months of reflection. In the evening, the hour of repast having arrived, I asked M. de Coussay if he knew M. de Janville.

"This name belongs to one of the oldest and most honorable families in Normandy," replied he. "I have heard the Knight de Janville spoken of in the world as a fighter by profession, who has given and received many sword-thrusts in his life; for thirty years and more, he has been considered as a fighter of the highest rank; they say he is very vigorous, notwithstanding his age of a half century, but I have never seen him. Madame de Malezieux, his relation, assured me that his noble profession began to fatigue him, and that he thought of reposing on his laurels."

I did not tell M. de Coussay a single word touching upon the provocation that M. de Janville had just addressed me. He would have wished at once to have turned me from my design, which would have placed me in a very false position. I went to-

wards noon to the house of the Bernardines, where the prior who was to fill the office of second was waiting for me with impatience. Following the orders given the evening before, we resumed our dress of a monk, of white cloth with the hood, not forgetting all the accessories, the cord and tassels, and the rosary of large beads, finished by the bones and skull. We covered our monastic habit with a large cloak, which enveloped it entirely. I fastened upon my breast the silver crucifix, my usual safeguard. A carriage waiting in advance transported us to the Square des Victoires, so as to reach there before the hour appointed in the challenge. M. de Janville was very exact; he descended from his hack, and came to ask our coachman if M. de Rabasteins was in the carriage. I replied to him that we were waiting for his orders, and that he would please point out the way, as he did the first time. The Knight showed a certain surprise at my appearance. Without doubt he was frightened on seeing the ravages that years had made on my physiognomy. The deep wrinkles that furrowed his face caused the same reflections to arise in me. I must confess it, however, his attitude still announced great vigor. The man had lost nothing of his usual arrogance.

The carriage of M. de Janville, taking rapidly the direction to the boulevards, went up the Street of the Faubourg St. Denis. I was watching the road that he followed. I easily guessed that my adversary was leading me to the place where the first

quarrel had terminated in such a deplorable manner for him. He wished to wash out his affront on the same spot. This indication alone proved that his heart had nourished for a long time the desire of vengeance. Some new buildings had changed the aspect of this quarter. It was necessary then to choose for the tournament a list very different from that of 1750. The carriage which preceded ours stopped not far from a little meadow surrounded with hedges. M. de Janville descended rapidly from the hack, and, with a slow step, went to take his position in a place which seemed to be familiar to him. Having taken off his hat, he drew his sword from the sheath before we had time to step to the ground. A very marked impatience was shown through all his movements, that his second seemed to wish to moderate. At last we got out of the carriage, taking care to keep ourselves carefully wrapped; we advanced with a grave step, and when we were directly in front of our adversaries, at the distance of about one foot, with an equal quickness, we threw our mantles on the grass. I took then one step forward, and presented my breast to this incensed enemy:

"Sir, you have made a mistake," said I to him. "You have believed me to be a Knight of Malta, and, by this title, very skilful in the management of arms. I have been, for twenty-six years, a simple Bernardine monk, and the regret of having caused your death may perhaps be placed among the mo-

tives that determined me then to embrace the monastic life. I should have been able, without dishonor, to dispense with replying to your challenge; but I came to give you, with my own lips, an explanation worthy of you and myself."

It is impossible to describe the attitude of M. de Janville during the scene. Spite and astonishment were painted on his features; nevertheless, my discourse was not long in producing on my heart the effect that I expected.

"Sir, you have given me," replied he, "a second lesson; be sure that it will bear better fruit than the first. Your firmness and your moderation have taken away all my resentment. How, you are a monk! you, the last of the house of Rabasteins! It would have been much better for me had I taken the same part. I should have led a more peaceful life, and I should have caused fewer tears to flow. From this day, I will take a vow before you, to renounce all this bad habit of duelling. I will no longer draw the sword."

While pronouncing these words, he put back his weapon into the sheath, that he had drawn out thirsting for blood; then, raising the tone of his voice, the Knight added:

"Baron de Rabasteins, I regard myself as fully satisfied, and I consider you a brave and loyal gentleman."

He led us politely to our carriage, and remained

uncovered until the moment when the coachman whipped his horses and set off.

I did not hesitate to relate to M. de Coussay, in the evening, my second adventure with M. de Janville, since the event was so honorable for my adversary.

"It is to be hoped," said the counsellor to me, shaking his head, "that he will keep his promise, and in this case you will have rendered him a very great service, for society has expelled him from its midst, and you have just furnished him with the means of returning to it under the most favorable auspices."

My obliging host appeared very much interested in the course that public affairs were taking. According to him the wisest heads inclined towards insanity; the court resembled a madhouse, and the magistracy itself a factious crowd.

"One of the advantages of your state, Brother Maurice, is that you are ignorant of all that is passing in this lower world. You have, then, no knowledge of a political event so important that it is absorbing all the cabinets of Europe. You know very well that England possesses some very flourishing colonies in North America; half of the population are composed of people who come from the British Isles, and who are consequently subjects of King George III or of his predecessors. These colonies have just revolted against the mother country, wrong or right; we are not the judges of that question. The insur-

gents have converted their country into a republic, and have just sent commissioners to entreat the King of France to recognize that portion of North America as an independent state. Louis XVI, only consulting himself, has replied by a very plain refusal; in his eyes, to grant his protection to rebels would be refusing to acknowledge the most sacred rights of sovereigns; but the courtiers do not adopt this opinion, based on good faith and equity. The American envoys have received at Versailles an eager reception; every one is zealously interested in their cause, and all these marquises, with red heels and spangles, have been transformed into proud republicans: they wish to cross the ocean to go and defend the liberty of these oppressed people; they enrol volunteers, they form legions, they arm vessels. There is where we are; enthusiasm has gained the magistracy, who, not being able to fight, wish, however, to contribute to the success of the enterprise by giving their money; mine certainly will not go to increase the offering that Parliament is preparing for it."

During the frequent conversations that we had together, M. de Coussay became more and more alarming. One day at the end of June, he approached me with an air more reserved, more solemn than usual.

"Brother Maurice," said he to me, "I am ordered, on the part of M. de Barentin, to make you an official communication. You must know first, that our

first president is of an exemplary piety, and very much attached to the interests of the Church, which he has always defended with a most enlightened zeal. He succeeded, last year, in the presidency of the Court of Protection, to M. de Malesherbes, a magistrate most remarkable for his knowledge, his integrity, and his virtues; but too enthusiastic over novelties. Under such a guide, the Court of Protection lost in some manner its old form, which breathed calm severity; the zeal for work decreased. Three or four months have sufficed to enable M. de Barentin to establish all on the old footing, and to make an admirable impression on his company. His successes have been so sparkling, that M. Malesherbes has been constrained to render homage to the superiority of his successor; and he has done so, I must confess it, with a modesty capable of heightening his merit. 'He is,' said he, 'the man for all times and for all events; I was only the man of circumstances and accidents.'

"I do not doubt," continued M. de Coussay, "but the King intends to make M. de Barentin a Keeper of the Seals. You will understand, then, that the words of a magistrate who stands so high in the estimation of his sovereign, should have a decisive authority. This is what he has just said to me on the subject of the Priors sent to Paris by the monasteries: 'These good fathers have been badly advised in their steps; their presence here, under the eyes of the most ardent enemies of the monastic bodies,

far from serving the interests of the religious corporations to which they belong, has caused them truly an injury. They have given some disagreeable interpretations to these assemblies of the regular clergy; they have shown them to be dangerous, illegal. The wisest part, according to my belief, is that they should decide to leave Paris with as little noise and as quickly as possible, to regain their monasteries without saying a word. If they do not do so with a good grace, they will oblige them to do so by violence. Give this warning to these religious on the part of a very well-informed friend, who seeks to spare them any trouble.'"

Such was the communication made by M. de Coussay in the name of the first President of the Court of Protection. I understood it in all its gravity. I went immediately to the house of the Bernardines, and told the Priors of our order of the warnings given by a personage as eminent as M. de Barentin. The good fathers were more frightened than I; they hastened to make known to the other corporations such an important advice. They all judged it prudent to conform to it. The assemblies ceased from that day, and the departures commenced to take place without trouble or noise. As for me, I was charmed at seeing my mission terminated. I had felt myself weighed down with a very heavy burden. Before leaving Paris, I desired to make a sort of pilgrimage. I went to the Street Ville l'Evêque. I looked there for the Convent of the Benedictines.

It occupied the same site, but some new building had changed the appearance: the fatal stairway that I had mounted twice, existed no longer. The beatings of my heart proved to me that years had not changed its feeling.

I bade an eternal adieu to Paris in the beginning of July, 1777. I took the direction of Lyons, and I stopped an entire week in that city, at the house of my first host, M. Brossat, whose warnings had been fully justified. At last, on the 1st of August, I returned to the Monastery of Aiguebelle, after an absence which had appeared to me very long. With what pleasure I found my cell again, my books, the silent cloister where I had given myself up to such sweet meditations. I hope that through God's favor I may never leave it again, and that my ashes will mingle with the ashes of the brothers who are reposing a few steps from us.

CONCLUSION.

The Baron de Rabasteins, designated in his community under the name of Brother Maurice, desired ardently never to leave the Abbey of Aiguebelle, and to finish his life there in the peace of the Lord. God did not deign to hear his wishes. When the news of the reunion of the deputies spread itself through the provinces at the end of 1786, the regular clergy believed the events very favorable to

increase the value of their claims. The heads of the orders decided that a very small number of envoys from the principal abbeys should join the fifteen Archbishops or Bishops, who were to take their seats in the Assembly of the Deputies. M. de Rabasteins was appointed by his superiors to fill this mission. He saw himself then constrained to return to Paris for the third time, and to join Father Hébert, General of the Endistes, Dom Chevreux, General of the Benedictines, and Abbé Luserbac, Prior of the Brives. These religious, with others whose names have escaped us, formed between them some conferences; but scarcely had the Assembly of Deputies held their first meetings (February, 1787), than the regular clergy understood that their position had become much more critical than in 1776. The envoys decided to wait, without leaving Paris, in the hope that more favorable circumstances would present themselves: they were becoming from day to day more threatening. They were not long in hearing of the insurrection in Dauphiné, the troubles of Grenoble, and the assembly that was held at Vizille. They prevented Brother Maurice, without doubt, from regaining his abbey, which was situated in a country given up to revolt. The bloody scenes which preluded the opening of the General States made them understand that the wisest part was to remain quiet.

Events followed with a frightful rapidity. The suppression of the monastic orders decided the

question in a cruel manner. The sort of rage with which they pursued the people of the Church in the provinces inspired many of the religious with the thought of coming to seek a refuge in Paris, where they hoped to conceal themselves better. This expedient succeeded for some time; but this crowd of clergymen in the capital became fatal to them. Pointed out by some miserable wretches, they became, after the 10th of August, 1792, the object of the most active search. One hundred and eighty-five priests or religious of several orders were led to the Convent of the Carmelites in the Vaugirard Street, and guarded as prisoners by several picket guards. Among these noble captives were distinguished M. Dulan, Archbishop of Arles; Louis and Joseph de Larochefoucault—the first Bishop of Beausais, and the second Bishop of Saintes. The 2d of September, the cut-throats, having exhausted themselves with blood and carnage at the Abbey, thought of the poor priests detained at the Carmelites, and resolved to go to this convent, to follow there the course of their exploits. No one is ignorant of what they did there. The three Bishops were massacred in the most atrocious manner; the other Bishops shared their martyrdom. However, a few were happy enough to escape the steel of the assassins. The Abbot of the Pannonie, one of those who was the most exposed, in the hope of saving the life of the Archbishop of Arles, succeeded in coming out of this frightful butchery safe and sound. Later,

he furnished several families with information on the subject of the religious massacre at the Carmelites, of which some persons had made an incorrect list.

The Abbot of la Pannonie pointed out M. de Rabasteins as one of the victims of this terrible day; an undisputable proof took away all doubt with regard to Brother Maurice. On the battle-field where the conquered received the palm of martyrdom they found strewn around, some breviaries, scapulars, and rosaries. Among these spoils, that the conquerors disdained to carry away, figured a little silver crucifix, isolated and suspended by the hands to a silken cord. Some pious people in the quarter tremblingly occupied themselves with gathering up these several objects, when the commissioners of the Commune having returned, ordered them to give them up at once. These books, rosaries, and this silver crucifix were taken away to the section of the Red Cross. What has become of them? We do not know. This little crucifix was, without doubt, that which Pauline de Vigny had given, forty-two years before, to young De Rabasteins, as a precursory token of a chaste union that God, in his impenetrable designs, did not wish to have completed.

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